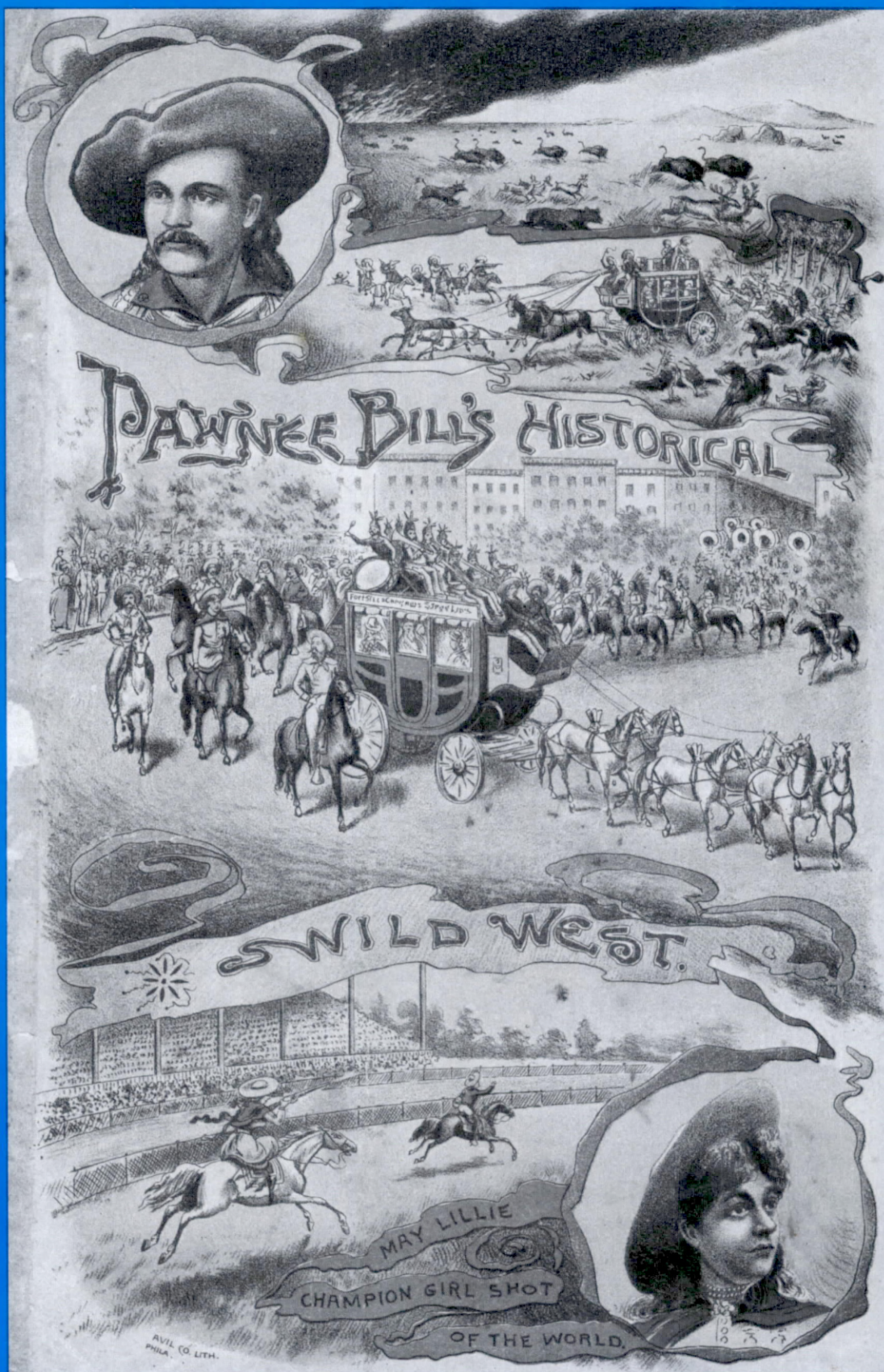


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MAY-JUNE 1986



THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Vol. 30, No. 3 **MAY-JUNE 1986**

Fred D. Pfening, Jr., Editor

Fred D. Pfening III, Managing Editor and Joseph T. Bradbury, Associate Editor

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THIS MONTH'S COVER

After being with the Sells Bros. Circus in 1887 Gordon W. Lillie—Pawnee Bill—took out his own wild west show in 1888. After an unsuccessful tour, the show did not tour in 1889. In 1890, however, Pawnee Bill returned to outdoor show business with a grandstand exhibition which played extended dates.

The program on this month's cover is from the June 29-July 13, 1890 engagement at Tolchester Beach, across the bay from Baltimore. The original measures 7" x 9" with striking artwork featuring soft greens and reds. The twenty page book, printed by Avil Lithograph of Philadelphia, contains biographical sketches of Lillie and many of the other performers in the show as well as a program insert listing the 20 acts. The show gave only one performance each day with the odd starting time of 4:50 P.M. Original in Pfening Archives.

NEW MEMBERS

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2962

REINSTATED MEMBER

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 Pittsburgh, PA 15210

2306

DUES REMINDER

The dues and subscription notices were mailed in early May. This is the last issue of *Bandwagon* you will receive if your payment is not received by July 15. If you have not as yet sent your payment do so at once to continue receiving the magazine and continuing your membership. Payment should be sent to Johann W. Dahlinger, Secretary-Treasurer, 743 Beverly Park Place, Jackson, Michigan 49203.

NEED JOHN R. NORTH INFO

I am interested in hearing from anyone with first hand remembrances of John Ringling North, or anyone who has memorabilia, films, photos or documents relative to his circus career or personal life. I am preparing a biography of John Ringling North and a history of the Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey Circus while it was in his control.

Please write to Ernest Albrecht at 43 Ainsworth Ave., East Brunswick, N.J. 08816, or call collect (201) 247-7923 evenings, (201) 548-2884 days.

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ERRATA

Bill Gresham of Fort Wayne, Indiana, advises that Terrell Jacobs did not join Arthur Bros. Circus in Logansport, Indiana as was indicated in the recent Jacobs biography. His equipment, loaded on two Wabash system flats, was added to the Arthur train as it stopped in Peru, Indiana on the move to Fort Wayne. Jacobs did not appear in Fort Wayne with Arthur, but was in the performance at Toledo, Ohio, the following day.

Paul Horsman of Auburn, New York, reports that Jacobs presented 27 lions and tigers at the Barnes Bros. Circus in the Chicago Stadium on opening night in 1947. He further notes that he worked for Jacobs at the Wisconsin State Fair in Milwaukee in 1948. The Terrell Jacobs Wild Animal Circus played a number of fair dates in 1948 as a back end of the midway show as many as ten times a day. Appearing with Jacobs were Walter Jennier and Mickey King. The show was presented in a sidewalled arena using recorded music.

Steve Gossard of Bloomington, Illinois, writes that the photo on page 25 of the March-April issue is actually pictures two flying troupes: the Flying Wards and the Charles Fisher groupe. The Wards are on the left, and the Fishers on the right. In the photo from left to right front row are: Mayme Ward, Billie Summers (a man in woman's costume), Bessie Catannah (sometimes spelled Katankcha), Jennie Ward, Mrs. Charles Fisher, Miss Musselman, and Charles Fisher. Back row, left to right: Eddie Ward, Alec Todd, and the Beckman brothers of

Quincy, Illinois. He further notes that this photo was actually taken in 1914 as both acts appeared on Hagenbeck-Wallace that season. When the show played the Wards' and Fishers' hometown of Bloomington, Illinois in 1914 both local newspapers carried the press agent's story that the troupe was from Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

BARNUM MUSEUM RESTORATION

The Barnum Museum in Bridgeport, Connecticut will close on July 1 for at least 18 months to undergo a complete refurbishing of its interior. The undertaking will be financed by city, state and private funds with three and a half million dollars already committed to the project.

SEASON'S REVIEW

Please remember the 1986 season review as you visit circuses this year. Information on all aspects of shows as well as photos will be of great help in recording the history of this circus season. Send all data and photos to: Fred Pfening III, 2315 Haverford Road, Columbus, Ohio 43220.

ADDRESS CHANGES

Please advise the Editor when you move so that you will not miss receiving your copy of *Bandwagon*. Second class mail will not be forwarded by the Post Office. List old as well as new address.

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BANDWAGON BACK ISSUES
2515 Dorset Rd.
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Model Circus Auction

Saturday, July 19, 1986

10:00 A.M.

Dean Gurney of Newark Valley, NY has decided to close his circus museum & commissioned us to sell it at public auction. We have moved it to our Olde Mill Auction Gallery for your convenience, located one mile north of Groton, NY on Rt. 38.

This collection includes a complete hand made model circus in 5/8 gauge plus many circus related items including 1896 John Robinson's programs; large assortment of circus posters with Tom Mix 5 sheet streamer; R.B. & B.B. 8 sheet girl & elephant poster; 1916 Bernardi Greater Shows poster; R.B. & B.B. with train whistle inside of back; 1935 R.B. & B.B. of Miss Dorothy Herbert Head with horses head (1 sheet); early elephant hook; one cent peanut & gumball machines; other coin machines; penny arcade picture cards; 1930's Tom Mix 16mm silent movie; clown & showman's trunks; etc. This will be a great auction for the collector or dealer. Pictured brochure available about June 15th, by writing or phoning Auctioneers.

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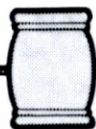
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John Robinson Circus

Season of 1927

Part One

by Joseph T. Bradbury

The 1927 season was the third and final for Sam B. Dill as manager of the John Robinson Circus. When the new year rolled around the show was in its winterquarters in West Baden, Indiana. Some miles upstate the other two American Circus Corporation units, Sells-Floto, and Hagenbeck-Wallace were in quarters in Peru. There were no changes in the managers of the three circuses for 1927. Zack Terrell remained in charge of Sells-Floto with J.D. Newman as his general agent; C.D. (Danny) Odom was manager of Hagenbeck with J.C. Donahue as general agent, and of course Dill ran John Robinson with Arthur Hopper as general agent.

Both Sells-Floto and Hagenbeck-Wallace continued on 30 cars but John Robinson was to be increased from 25 cars to 30 according to several reports in the *Billboard*. Strangely enough the J.A. Havilland files, which historians have relied on for many years, lists John Robinson as still on 25 cars in 1927. This is definitely in error as a competent eyewitness counted a total of 28 cars back plus one in advance, a total of 29. Conceivably the show did begin the season with 30 as the *Billboard* contended and soon dropped one car, however this isn't likely. In all probability John Robinson moved on 29 cars in 1927.

In 1926 the show travelled on 1 advance, 6 stocks, 12 flats, and 6 coaches, a total of 25. CHS member Gordon Potter caught John Robinson at Benton Harbor, Michigan, June 25, 1927. At that time the show had 28 cars back, 7 stocks, 14 flats, and 7 coaches. Pot-

ter advises he spent considerable time in the rail yards that day and took some important notes. Loaded on the 14 flats were a total of 51 wagons (including cages) and two trucks, 53 pieces of equipment. Twelve flat cars loaded 4 vehicles each, one flat had 3 vehicles, and one had 2 wagons. Potter was asked to comment on the flat cars, noting the recent discussion that the show had claimed to be using "steel" or "semi steel" flats. Potter said they were all 60 ft. long and typical wooden variety of cars. He recalled that was the time these cars had the turnbuckles on the truss rods turned up so tight that the center of the flat was approximately one foot higher than the ends. Potter said this feature fascinated him in particular so he took special notice of it and thought about it many times in subsequent years. He concluded all of the flats appeared this way and he doubts if one could have been a semi steel car.

In all probability the color scheme for the flats and stocks was the same as the previous year, orange (or dark yellow) with lettering in red. Where the additional stock and flat cars used by the show in 1927 came from is not known to the author but possibly from the excess cars stored at the Peru quarters.

As mentioned several times in this series the American Circus Corporation required a strict accounting between all shifts of property between the various units. However, at times the researcher can become quite confused by some of the correspondence between the shows relating to transfers of property. For example in early 1927 John Robin-

This colorful letterhead was used in 1927. The design had been in use for several years. The portrait of the first John Robinson is in natural hues surrounded by a gold band and blue background. The show's title is in red and the various performers wear costumes in green, blue, red, gold, and lavender, a "riot" of color as the press boys would say. Pfening Archives.

son should be paying others for the additional cars to be used but instead in the Pfening Archives is this fascinating example of a letter dated January 20, 1927 from the John Robinson Circus to Sells-Floto. It reads as follows:

"This acknowledges receipt of your check #704 for \$5000.00 in payment for two flat cars and one stock car.

"Enclosed find statement for your share of Robert Hickey's salary and expenses for first two weeks of the year. Kindly send check."

The question immediately is raised. Why would Sells-Floto be paying John Robinson for three rail cars? Looks like somehow it should be the other way around. The truth, if known, possibly was this was payment of a long standing debt or for some transaction for which we have no knowledge. For sure Sells-Floto which currently was equipped with 70 ft. all steel flat cars delivered by Keith in 1922 would have no road need for two flats of the John Robinson variety.

During the first few weeks in January 1927 there was no news in the *Billboard* concerning John Robinson's activities in West Baden. In the January 29, 1927 *Billboard* there was a large advertisement of the International Alliance of Billposters and Billers advising their members they were at liberty to sign with certain circuses who had made an agreement with the union as to pay scales and working conditions. On the list of shows were all of the American Circus Corporation units plus the majority of the remaining railers. Of special note was the name Sells-Floto & Buffalo Bill Wild West, which in-

licated the Bill title was still being kept active primarily as a weapon against the Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West Show which had provided stiff competition for the ACC units since its revival in 1925. Some years Buffalo Bill was tacked on to Hagenbeck-Wallace and at other times made a part of the Sells-Floto title.

In this same *Billboard* was an article that the American Circus Corporation had acquired a shipment of animals which recently arrived in New York City. Zack Terrell and Lou C. Delmore, Sells-Floto sideshow manager, had gone to New York and left the city on January 14 with the animals to accompany them to the Peru quarters. Loaded in a baggage car were four giraffes, two elephants, and a tapir. Emory Stiles attended them throughout the journey and they arrived in Peru in excellent condition. At the time of this article there was no mention as to how the animals would be distributed between the three circuses.

Several weeks elapsed with no news from West Baden. The February 19, 1927 *Billboard* contained only a short paragraph that Ed Wagner recently visited the John Robinson Circus quarters in West Baden and reported that the animals were in fine shape, and that Bert Noyes, as usual, would have charge of the menagerie this season.

An important story in the March 12, 1927 *Billboard* told primarily of the activity of the various animal trainers at the Peru quarters but also mentioned the important fact there were now six giraffes in the animal barns. This meant that no doubt each of the three shows would get two of them for the coming season. Other newly arrived animals were 40 camels, a saddle-back tapir, six elephants, and a number of smaller varmints and birds. Maybe 40 camels at one time might be stretching the truth a bit but it was positively a fact that there were six giraffes, and two of them went to each of the three circuses.

Since these were the first giraffes ever owned by the American Circus Corporation it meant that six vans to transport them had to be built. If all six were built by Bill Curtis at Peru, or if two were constructed in the West Baden shops is not known to the author. Curtis probably built all six and the two for John Robinson were later sent to West Baden. Likewise when the John Robinson giraffes arrived is not known nor how they were transported from Peru to West Baden. Even if the vans were built in Peru and later sent to West Baden chances are best they would not have risked sending the animals in them to face the cold weather enroute. The animals probably were shipped in heated baggage cars and the vans on a system flat. Regardless of the details of the shipment the two giraffes, a male named John and a female, Mary, plus the two road vans were on hand in West Baden by opening date. The vans were large, well built vehicles, and each one was stenciled with the name of its occupant.

There was an interesting article in late February in the *Billboard* which told of some of the tent orders for the Baker-Lockwood Co. of Kansas City. The firm was working on what was said to be the second largest big top in the country for Sells-Floto (only

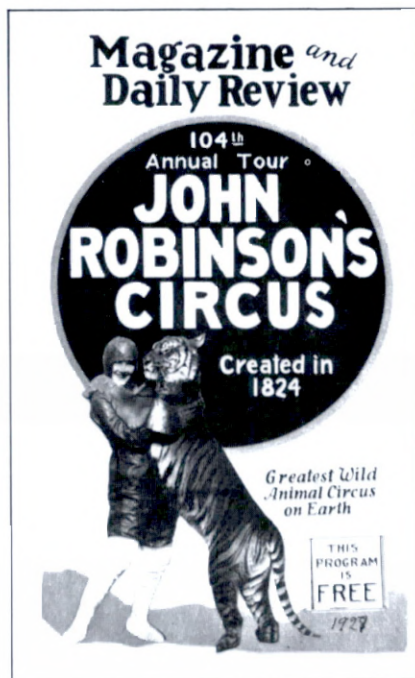
Ringling-Barnum could claim a larger tent). The new top has to be a 170 ft. round with three 50 ft. middle pieces. Of special interest was the new big top Baker-Lockwood was making for John Robinson. It has to be a 150 ft. round with three 50's. Orders already completed included a 130 ft. round with three 50's big top for Fred Buchanan's Robbins Bros., and a 75 ft. round with three 30's for George Engesser, owner of the Zellmar Bros. Circus. Ready for delivery also were orders from 101 Ranch Wild West, Paul English Players, Bybee Stock Company, Cadmean's Chautauquas, Ed Ward's Princess Stock Company, Hagenbeck-Wallace, Bob Morton, and Honest Bill's show.

The *Billboard* also carried a very short bit saying that Lloyd H. Cain of Sioux City, Iowa who had a pet hobby of woodcarving for several years had been hired by John Robinson to do woodcarving for that circus. Presumably, he would work mainly to decorate the menagerie cages.

It wasn't until March 19, 1927 *Billboard* came out that the circus world got any substantial news from the John Robinson quarters. However, in that issue was an informative article headlined, JOHN ROBINSON CIRCUS PREPARING 104th TOUR. It was dated March 10 at West Baden and said that preparations for the 104th annual tour of America's oldest circus had gone forward steadily at the quarters almost from the first day the show arrived home last November.

It continued: "With the addition of five cars to the train, the rolling stock has received a thorough overhauling under the direction of assistant manager, Egypt Thompson, who has turned the train over to the trainmaster Ben Sturges and the painters for the

The front cover of the 1927 John Robinson Magazine and Daily Review featured a photo of Ione Carl and her wrestling tiger. Joe Bradbury Collection.



finishing touches. With the exception of the wagon shop, the personnel of bosses in quarters is the same as in previous years. Ed Hopkins has been in charge as master mechanic, assisted by M.G. Smith, wagon builder; William Dyer, blacksmith; A.J. McMullin, woodworker; Harry Smith, Ed Long and H.V. Miller, machinists, and the usual score or more of shop helpers. B.L. Lano has charge of the paint shop, assisted by Bob Moore and 20 men. Mrs. Grace Orr has had the wardrobe room in full operation since January 15 and is making an entire new set of spectacle wardrobe, trappings etc. She is assisted by Mrs. Schroder and Mrs. Peggy King of the show, and eight local seamstresses.

"Theodore Schroder and Captain Noyes, in charge of the animal barn, have been conducting daily rehearsals of their various acts. Other trainers working out daily include Margaret Thompson and Ione Carl. The animal barn has been thrown open daily to the public at stated hours this winter, allowing all who desired to see the actual work of training wild animals. The enlarging of the show will be noted in a big addition to the menagerie, two giraffes, several elephants and camels, llamas and other hay-eating animals, as well as five cages of non-performing cat animals having augmented the already large zoo, which has long been a feature with the show.

"In the ring barn, Bob Thornton, with the aid of Rudy Rudynoff and Carlos Carreon, has broken a new 12 horse liberty act, giving the show three such acts to use in one number; also a dozen new menage horses. Carlos has added several horses to his Wild West string, likewise two new Libery high jumpers.

"The performance will be along the usual lines followed by the Robinson show for the last several seasons, but considerably elaborated in keeping with the increase in size of the show. Wild animal acts will be featured, together with the various equine numbers—menage, Liberty, jumps and races—but in addition a well balanced program of circus acts has been arranged to follow the completely revamped opening spectacle."

It will be noted this article said the show would be enlarged by 5 cars and if the report was correct, at least for the opening of the season, the one car, in addition to the 29 total Potter saw, was probably a coach, giving the show 8. Both Sells-Floto and Hagenbeck-Wallace had eight coaches in their 30 car trains.

In the Pfening Archives is an interesting document, copy of a letter from Carter H. Fitz-Hugh, Webster Building, Chicago dated February 18, 1927 and addressed to Mr. C.D. Odom, John Robinson Circus, Peru, Indiana. It reads as follows.

"As a part of the consideration in the sale of Pullman Tourist Car No. 1486 will you kindly sign below and return this agreement, retaining copy for your files.

"This in accordance with our verbal agreement made today.

"That Pullman Tourist Car No. 1486 is purchased by John Robinson Circus for its own uses and purposes in its circus organiza-

tion and will not be sold or otherwise disposed of, or placed in the possession of others, unless the consent of The Pullman Company thereto has been priorly secured in writing."

The letter was for Carter H. Fitz-Hugh by H.E. Miller, and there was printed at bottom of the page "Accepted, John Robinson Circus by _____." At one corner of page was Jerry Mugivan's initials.

This former Pullman car no doubt became a part of the 1927 John Robinson train, either as an addition to the total number or as replacement for a former car.

There were a few personnel notes in the trade publications over the next few weeks. One item said that the Slivers Johnson troupe featuring four midgets, which had been with the Bob Morton Indoor Circus during the winter would leave that show at Mobile, Alabama on April 2. The troupe was again scheduled to be with John Robinson during the coming season. Another item said that R. Louis Sanderson, air calliope player for the past two seasons with Wade Zumwalt's band would again troupe with John Robinson in 1927.

In early April it was reported that "Kitty," the wrestling Bengal tiger, severely bit Ione Carl, animal trainer at the quarters. Attendants pushed back the snapping beast with poles and rescued Miss Carl.

Several *Billboard* accounts mentioned that the menagerie would be a strong feature for John Robinson in 1927. Fortunately Gordon Potter made a number of important notes of this department when he caught the show that season. In the menagerie were 15 cage wagons and two giraffe vans. Lead stock included 8 elephants, 12 camels, and 6 zebras. Of course the big attraction were the two new giraffes.

The Woodcock files record that the 8 elephants were Wallace Pinto, Jughead Nellie, Floto Jennie, Joskey, Wallace Trilby, Cross Country Babe, Wallace Eva, and Margaret. Margaret was new to the herd having been purchased from the Memphis Zoo. The others had been on the show in 1926. Two others which had been with John Robinson the previous season were transferred to Hagenbeck-Wallace for the 1927 season. These were Mabel and Queen.

The April 9, 1927 *Billboard* printed the John Robinson official "Call" advertisement. The ad noted the 104th season would open Friday, April 22, at West Baden. "All people engaged report on showgrounds at West Baden, Monday, April 18, at 9 A.M. Acknowledge this call at once by mail to West Baden, Ind.," it read. The ad concluded: "can use Workingmen in all departments."

A short time later Karl Kae Knecht, secretary-treasurer of the Circus Fans Association wrote in his column in *Billboard*, "With the Circus Fans," informed all that the CFA would be holding its second annual convention in West Baden with the season's opening of the John Robinson Circus. A real celebration was planned. Knecht said the banquet would be held the evening of April 22 following a day on the John Robinson lot. All present would have lunch with Manager Sam Dill in the Robinson cookhouse at noon. "Edward Ballard, of the American Circus Corporation, who lives in West Baden, has personally been busy making plans for the fans entertainment," Knecht wrote.

Only a few other notes concerning John Robinson appeared in the *Billboard* prior to opening date. One mentioned the Aerial Kellys would again be with the show. They had recently closed with the London Hippodrome Circus, an indoor show in Buffalo, New York. Prior to then they had played some vaudeville dates. Also published was the roster for the John Robinson advance car. It included William Backell, manager; S.J. Clauson, press agent; Maurice Cain, special agent; Harry Withers, boss billposter; Clarence Chrismon, boss lithographer, and M.E. Shindeldecker, boss bannerman. Nineteen helpers in all departments were also listed.

It was now Spring 1927 and time for the circus season to begin. For most citizens times were considered good. In the White House sat Calvin "Silent Cal" Coolidge who firmly believed that "the least government was the best government." Next year would see another presidential election and Silent Cal quickly ended all speculation concerning himself with only a few short words, "I don't choose to run" and that was it. In those days

a clear cut announcement didn't have to be followed by radio and TV commentators carrying on endlessly on what the president said. Coolidge had been a popular figure in U.S. politics since the time in 1919 as governor of Massachusetts he quickly used the national guard to put an end to the Boston police strike. He, as vice president, had assumed the presidency following the death of Warren Harding in 1923 and served out that unexpired term. He was later elected to a full four year term in 1924. Although he was then, and for many years thereafter has been the subject of numerous jokes, especially certain "sayings" attributed to him, he was a popular and quite strong chief executive. He sent the Marines at different times into both Haiti and Nicaragua when it was necessary to preserve order. Living in the late 20's even as a child one realizes it was a different country, a different world. Historians in decades or centuries to come will conclude which was the better time—1927 or 1986. As for the circus fan, it's no contest. In the Spring of 1927, a short two years away from the great depression which changed everything, there was a massive array of circuses, both rail and overland ready to take the road.

Railroad circuses going out in 1927 included Ringling-Barnum, 100 cars, Sells-Floto, 30 cars, Hagenbeck-Wallace, 30 cars, John

John Robinson Circus on the lot at West Baden, Indiana, Opening Day, April 22, 1927. Attendees of the Circus Fans Convention being held at the same time are lined up in foreground. The two gentlemen kneeling in front are Bob Hickey, the show's general press representative, (left) and Harry Atwell, famed circus photographer. Note new canvas for the marquee, big top, menagerie, and midway stands. The show used this layout on lots that permitted it. The six pole menagerie tent is erected adjacent to the four pole big top. This permits the many trained wild animals to move from their cages inside the menagerie through runways to the steel arena in the big top. This photo was printed in the June 1927 *White Tops*. Photo by Sprauer, West Baden. Pfening Archives.



Robinson, 30 cars (according to some reports), Al G. Barnes, 30 cars, Robbins Bros., 25 cars, Christy Bros., 25 cars, Sparks, 20 cars, Walter L. Main, 15 cars, Gentry Bros., 10 cars, and a new one for the season, although short lived, Cook and Cole, 15 cars. Added to this list was the 25 car Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West Show.

Railers parading in 1927 were Robbins Bros., Christy Bros., Sparks, Walter L. Main, Gentry Bros., and the 101 Ranch Wild West.

Overland shows on the road were Downie Bros., Mighty Haag, Seils-Sterling, Hunts, Atterbury & Mighty Hooze, Honest Bill, Moon Bros., Zellmar Bros., M.L. Clark & Sons, Orton Bros., O'Neil Bros., LaMont Bros., Vanderburg Bros., Stark Bros., Davidson Bros., Rose Killian, Henry Bros., Foster Bros., Dorsey Bros., Silvan-Drew, Olinger Bros., Richards Bros., and Sam Dock's Great Keystone.

Downie Bros., a rather large outfit, moved entirely by motor vehicle as did several smaller shows, but the majority of the overland circuses in 1927 traveled with a combination of motor trucks and equine powered wagons. Most of the larger overland shows presented a daily street parade.

The 1927 John Robinson season opened as scheduled on April 22 in West Baden, Indiana. The April 30, 1927 *Billboard* had one of those truly outstanding reviews of the initial John Robinson stand, the kind a circus history researcher loves to find. The review is most complete, listing program, staff, physical characteristics, and events of the day. The article was headed "CIRCUS FANS CONVENTION AT JOHN ROBINSON OPENING. West Baden Sparkles with Festivities of Double Event—Robinson Show Launches 104th Tour with New Dress and Improvements—Fans Re-Elect Officers." Actually the headline served both the circus review and the convention review which were printed as separate articles. The circus review read as follows:

"West Baden, Ind., April 23—The famous resort town of West Baden, Ind., was on the circus map this week when the John Robinson Circus got under way for its 104th tour the afternoon of April 22, and the Circus Fans Association held its second annual con-

"UNFORGETABLE"

John Robinson's Circus

GENERAL OFFICE
WINTER QUARTERS
WEST BADEN, IND.

Manager Sam B. Dill used this style letterhead for his correspondence from West Baden, Indiana quarters and on the road in 1927. All lettering was in blue. Pfening Archives.

vention April 20 to 23. The Fans attended the matinee performance in a body and gave the show a rousing sendoff.

"The day, tho the weather was a trifle cool, was a very good one for the opening of a tented aggregation. Business in the afternoon was fair and at night very good.

"The circus is, as usual, offering a combination of wild and domestic animals and circus acts of a very pleasing nature. The program is a much better one than presented last season and even at the initial performances it was given in a peppy fashion, credit for which, of course, goes to Manager Sam B. Dill, Equestrian Director Robert Thornton and the performers.

"When a new season for the show begins it is natural that there should be a degree of freshness about an organization. Among this line there is nothing lacking with the oldest circus in this country. The costumes and trappings are elaborate and the show is equipped throughout with new canvas and other paraphernalia. One of the improvements made is that of having railings along the front row of seats, which is more of a protection to patrons in case of accidents on the track than the netting used heretofore.

"The canvas equipment includes the big top, a 150 with three 50 foot middle pieces;

menagerie, an 80 with five 40's; sideshow, a 60 with two 40's; cookhouse, 45 x 120; two stables, 34 x 105 each; padroom, a 60 with three 30's.

"There is quite a collection of animals in the menagerie, including 8 elephants, 12 camels, 6 zebras, ostriches, bears, etc. All told there are 21 cages of animals. [Author's note. This is not understood to mean 21 separate cage wagons. Reviewers often counted cage compartments to be included with the total number.]

"Gil Robinson, veteran showman, who has had the honor and pleasure for a number of seasons of being present at the first performance again blew the whistle for the inaugural of the 1927 season. He was introduced by Charles Boulware, former showman.

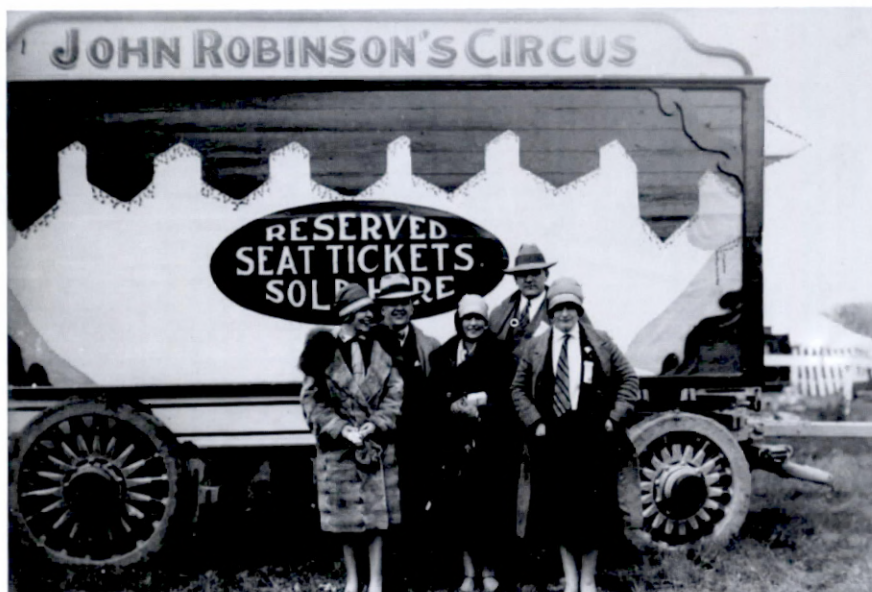
The Program

"The performance began promptly with a very good spectacle and continued without a hitch under the direction of Mr. Thornton. The entire company participated in the spec, the principal characters being Lone Carl, Theresa Baron, Irene Allen, E.V. Dixon, Ella Harris, Erna Rudynoff, Margaret Thompson and Aileen Tinkom. Mr. Dixon also is the announcer of the acts during the show and does his work in a creditable manner.

"No. 2—The double trapeze turns offered by the Kelleys and the Walters are extremely good, they doing some fast work and received a good hand.

"No. 3—"Victor," trained hippopotamus, on





the track, and little George Harmon and his pony, pleased.

"No. 4—Liberty ponies and football horses in the rings, presented by Robert and Ova Thornton, amused the crowds, and in the steel arena Theodore Schroeder put seven polar bears thru their paces. The trainer wrestles with one of the bears.

"No. 5—The Baron Sisters, Lorette Sisters, Ella Harris and Rita Bell perform the usual iron-jaw turn, doing it in a most pleasing manner.

"No. 6—Comedy acrobatics, by the Four Hassans and the Mohamids, in the rings, was a fast and good number and in the arena Ione Carl wrestles with a tiger.

"No. 7—Elizabeth Rooney and Erna Rudynoff are very graceful bareback riders and were well received.

"No. 8—Riding dogs and monkeys, in the rings, presented by Mr. Butler and Babe Moore, were especially pleasing to the kiddies. The tiger riding elephant, presented by Margaret Thompson, drew a good hand.

"No. 9—A very pretty display is the swinging ladder turn in which the following take part; Helen Aiman, Theresa Baron, Gladys Raines, Rita Bell, Babe Davis, Babe Feaster, Wilma Giavitch, Ella Harris, Elli Johnson, Eva Kelly, Ethel LaGrande, Dora Lawrence, Peggy Leonard, Joan Loescher, Mickey McKeon, Bobby McKeon, Julia O'Donnell, Georgia Simmons, Loretta Tucker, Jessie Walters, Bobby Warriner, Daisy Williams, Billie Young, Peggy King and Blanche Fenton.

"No. 10—A novelty number was that of trained camels and horses, in the ring, presented by Mr. Butler and Frank Biron. Two camels and one horse appear in each of the two rings and the act received a good hand. Nine Royal Bengal tigers, in the arena, have been well trained and are presented by Capt. Schroeder.

"No. 11—Wild West lineup, introducing Carlos Carreon and cowboys and girls.

"No. 12—There was but one act in this display, that of eight black-maned African lions, performing under the direction of Miss

Group of unidentified CFA convention attendees on the John Robinson lot at West Baden, Indiana, opening day, April 22., 1927. In back is the reserved seat ticket wagon. Through the years this wagon had a number of different designs painted on the sides. Noted circus photographer Harry Atwell took this shot. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wisconsin) Photo.

Carl, who has them well in hand. A very good number.

"No. 13—Four performing elephants in the two rings, handled by Madam Lorette and Ella Harris. The pachyderms go thru the usual stunts and formations.

"No. 14—Slivers Johnson and his singing mule, 'Rocks,' had the audience chuckling.

"No. 15—Trained Indian ponies, the 'spots' trained and presented by Chief Robert Bear, and the 'sorrels' by Chief Rolling Stone, was a very interesting number.

"No. 16—The comedy aerial bar act by the Four Eugenes, working over a net, was an excellent offering, and the boys 'clicked.' They work fast and put over their stunts to telling effect. Two work 'straight.'

"No. 17—Comedy riding acts, by the Rudynoffs and the Correias, who perform splendidly on their mounts.

"No. 18—On the track, Eddie Reece, billed as the 'Human Bridge.' An auto is driven across his chest while he is lying on the ground.

"No. 19—Wire acts by the McKeon Family, Tetu Robinson, Elizabeth Romig and the Two Eddys, who perform very capably on the steel thread. The feature of the display is the accomplishment of a back somersault, feet to feet, on the wire by Mr. Eddy.

"No. 20—Big menage number, in which horses and riders appear on the track. It is a very pretty and meritorious display and the horsemanship is excellent. The riders are Helen Aiman, Theresa Baron, Gladys Raines, Rita Bell, Anna Butler, Ione Carl, Miss Correia, Babe Davis, Babe Feaster, Blanche Fenton, Wilma Giavitch, Ella Harris, Elli Johnson, Eva Kelly, Peggy King,

Ethel LaGrande, Dora Lawrence, Joan Loescher, Julia O'Donnell, Elizabeth Romig, Erna Rudynoff, Georgia Simmons, Ova Thornton, Lorette Tucker, Jessie Walters, Bobby Warriner, Daisy Williams and Billie Young.

"No. 21—The Ben Hassan Arab Troupe of seven, featuring Ben Hassan, the human wheel, who turns cartwheels from one end of the hippodrome track to the other. The boys do some fine pyramid formations and tumbling.

"No. 22—English fox hunt concluding with an exhibition of high jumps, the equines being ridden by Misses Thornton, Carl, Butler, Carreon.

"The clown numbers, including walk-arounds, given thruout the performance, drew the laughs. Clown alley is made up of Slivers Johnson, producer; Herman Boyer, Eli Cassis, Lawrence Cross, Wyatt Davis, Haven Feaster, Charles Fenton, George Harmon, Harold Nicholson, Emmett Kelley, Bert Lawrence, Ambrose, Michael and Billy McKeon, Victor Moran, Jack O'Brien, Harvey Parker, Grant Ross, Percy Smith, Doc Stoddard, Jimmy Walters and Joe Wilde.

"Band

"The band, a very good one, under the capable leadership of Wade Zumwalt, is made up of Benny Waters, W. H. Putnam and Ross Zumwalt, cornets; Wiley B. Scott, George B. Carroll, Morgan Dollarhide and George F. Wilson, clarinets; Emil Paavola and T. J. Dunaher, baritones; A. E. Lamb and Albert Gese Luders, trombones; Harry Wilkinson and Claude J. Coans, sousaphones; R. Louis Sanderson, air calliope; Albert Yoder, bass drum, and Olin Long, snare drum.

"Wild West

"Immediately after the big show performance the Wild West concert is given, the participants being Carlos Carreon, Etta Carreon, Frank Biron, Pearl Biron, Richard Smith, Trude Lomax and Ethel LaGrande, in trick and fancy roping and riding, broncho busting, etc., and 14 Indians, Peter Shanagreau, chief.

"Side Show

"Duke Mills is again in charge of the kid show and his lineup of features includes M. Travers, lecturer and magic; Mme Grace Orr, futures; Chet Cain, tattooer, Lloyd Cain, wood whittler; H. E. Conn, musical act; Katharine Childers, Hawaiians; Bertie Davis, sword walker, Mlle D'Arcy, snakes; Marie Hand, bag puncher; Jack Huber, armless artist; Kean's Kilties; Mike and Sulu, pinheads; Eddie Reece, strong man. In the side show band and minstrels are A. V. Bass, leader; S. B. Davis, William Harris, Robert Jefferson, A. W. Johnson, Willie Liner, H. D. Lynk, Nobel Ragen, James White and Douglas Williams. On the ticket boxes are Jack Grimes, Al Vincent, Jack Hill and Ben Snyder; ticket taker, Jasper Fulton, who is also mail agent.

"The Staff

"Sam B. Dill, manager; W. M. Thompson,

assistant manager; A. R. Hopper, general agent; Theo Forstall, treasurer; Jack Youden, secretary; Leonard Karsh, front door; Robert Thornton, equestrian director assisted by Rudy Rudynoff; Duke Mills, manager side show; Jack Elkins, superintendent inside tickets; W. J. Lester and L. R. Mitchell, contracting agents; William Backell, manager advance car No. 1; Fred Barker, manager No. 2 car; Joe H. Sanderlin, manager opposition brigade; S. J. Clauson, contracting press agent; C. A. Lawrence, press ahead; Karl Knudson, press back; Robert E. Hickey, general press representative; E. W. Damron and C. J. Falla, 24 hour men; Will R. Hayes, legal adjuster; W. B. McCoy, detective; E. V. Dixon, announcer; H. C. Ingraham, physician.

"Bosses—George Davis, steward; Earl Bapa, props, Jack Moore, big top; Jack Pfeiffer, side-show canvas; R. H. King, chief electrician; Ben Sturges, trainmaster; James Gould, boss hostler; James Scanlon, ring stock; Bert Noyes, menagerie; Mr. and Mrs. J. D. Stevens, wardrobe; Edward Hopkins, master mechanic; M. G. Smith, blacksmith; W. V. Vanata, harness maker; Harry Smith and H. V. Miller, tractors; William Baney, dining cars and sleepers; E. H. Tucker, concessions; James Bennett, boss Zulu, and H. F. Denham, head usher.

"Among the Visitors

"Included among the visitors, besides the Fan members were Jerry Mugivan, Arthur Hopper, Robert E. Hickey, Rodney Harris; L. C. White, fair secretary of Monroe, Wis.; George Pope, formerly with Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus; Charles Boulware, formerly with Sells-Floto Circus; Gil Robinson, Roy Feltus, H. B. Gentry, Harry Atwell, circus photographer; Herbert Duval, former showman, now deputy commissioner of the State of Arkansas Department of Revenues, Little Rock, and Charles Wirth of The Billboard."

The article covering the CFA convention was also quite extensive.

All the present national officers were re-elected including Marshall L. King, president; Karl K. Knecht, secretary-treasurer, and Melvin D. Hildreth, recording secretary. Also elected were the directors and regional vice presidents. According to the article the most important piece of business was the making of an addition to their already well-known slogan—"We Pay as We Go." The revised slogan now reads—"We Pay as We Go—We Stand Between the Gifting Circus and the Public and Between the Gifting Public and the Circus." The association emphasized its stand further by a resolution that it and its members would refuse to aid any circus which was known to carry gift or immoral shows. In other business Gil Robinson was made an honorary member.

The principal speaker at the elaborate banquet served at the Hoosier Club was Lieutenant-Governor Harold Van Orman of Indiana. High praise was given by the CFA members to Ed Ballard of the West Baden Springs Hotel and one of the owners of the American Circus Corporation who was an ideal host to the convention attendees. Ap-



Elephant being given manicure by unidentified lady with attendant nearby. Freshly painted cages in back indicate photo may have been taken in winterquarters. John Robinson Circus about 1927. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wisconsin) Photo.

preciation was also extended to Jerry Mugivan, and to Sam B. Dill and the staff of the John Robinson Circus for their hospitality.

The *White Tops* later covered the entire spectrum of the West Baden Convention and ran a large two page photo showing the fans lined up on the lot with the John Robinson tents in the background. It can easily be seen the big top and menagerie tents were brand new made of snowy white canvas. An interesting visitor in the list printed in the *Billboard* article was noted circus photographer, Harry Atwell. He must have taken numerous photos that day but we have located only one example which is printed here. However, Atwell didn't take the large fan group on the lot shot. That one was taken by a local commercial photog and easily spotted in with the group of fans and circus personalities is "Old Harry" himself.

It may be noted in the *Billboard* review of the performance the spec was not titled. Neither is a title given in the printed program. The narrative on the spec is exactly the same as for that given in the 1926 program, the only change being different persons are listed for some of the principals. It was on an "Alice in Jungleland" or "Peter Pan in Animal Land" theme which were popular spec titles used by several shows in the 1920's.

The show again used a 16 page, 5½ x 9, rotogravure type program printed by Standard Gravure Corp. of Louisville, Kentucky. As was customary in the late 1920's the programs of all of the American Circus Corporation units were of this style and distributed free to patrons. The 1927 John Robinson program featured on the front cover a photo of Ione Carl and her wrestling tiger. Inside was

a likeness of the original John Robinson with his signature underneath. There were several pages of national advertising plus a few stock type photos mainly of clowns, spec riders etc.

The shows newspaper ads played heavily on the new giraffes in the menagerie. If John Robinson ever had any kind of litho featuring the giraffes an example has not surfaced. Examples of the newspaper "readers" the press department distributed along the route will be covered later.

After the very successful opener John Robinson moved out of its winterquarters town to the first road date of the season, Bedford, Indiana, on April 23 but the weatherman got downright nasty and both performances had to be canceled on account of the heavy rains and a sea of mud. A Sunday run followed with the show still in Indiana moving over the Monon Railroad the short 27 miles to Bloomington where performances were given on Monday, April 25. The following day the show was in Terre Haute and the populace turned out in great numbers to see the performances. It was a turnaway at the matinee with many patrons seated on the straw, and the evening saw a very strong house inside the big top. The final Hoosier date was in Evansville on April 27 then the show went across the Ohio River into Kentucky for stands at Owensboro, Louisville, and Covington. Next the Robinson train crossed the river again into Ohio for two days in Cincinnati, May 2-3, which was followed by Portsmouth on May 4.

While the show was in this area bad weather gave John Robinson a real pounding as well as another American Circus Corporation unit, Hagenbeck-Wallace. The May 7, 1927 *Billboard* told the story in an article headlined, "STORM PLAYS HAVOC ON ROBINSON SHOW. Loses Louisville and Covington Stands—Hagenbeck-Wallace Also Blows Cumberland." The story went on to say that due to very stormy and rainy weather the John Robinson Circus lost two stands—April 29, at Louisville, Kentucky, attributed to a severe storm, and April 30 at

Covington, Kentucky on account of an exceedingly muddy lot. The show was ready to open its doors at the matinee in Louisville when the storm came up. As a result a pole in the big top was broken and the cookhouse, horse tents, and padroom tents were blown down.

A broken axle on one of the flat cars caused a delay in getting to Covington from Louisville until late in the afternoon, and when efforts were made to get on the lot, it was found that rains on the day previous had made it so soft that wagons could not move for any great distance. Early that evening the train pulled across the Ohio River to Cincinnati, where the show had a two day stand May 2 and 3, on the hospital grounds at 12th and Central Avenue.

In addition to losing these stands the American Circus Corporation was handed another jolt when Hagenbeck-Wallace "blowed" the stand at Cumberland, Maryland, April 30, due to inclement weather conditions and a bad lot.

However all was not bad with the ACC units as reports from Chicago indicated that Sells-Floto did an exceedingly big business during its run at the Coliseum. On April 30 three performances were given and on May 1, the last day of the engagement, two capacity crowds were on hand. Another note again mentioned the good take Robinson had at Terre Haute, Indiana. Duke Mills' sideshow that day was open until 11 o'clock in the evening to accommodate customers.

Also in the May 7 issue, Karl Knudson, the John Robinson press agent, sent in a report with more details on some of the early stands. He mentioned that the first road date at Bedford, Indiana had a tough lot to get on. At 11 o'clock Manager Sam Dill decided that it would be an impossibility to give any performances and ordered the show placed back on the train and it was nearly midnight before the train was finally loaded. As many as 42 head of stock and two of the largest elephants were used in an effort to move some of the heavier wagons and they eventually had to be unloaded before they could be moved off the lot. The stake driver sank to the tops of the wheels and the poles were carried off the lot. The cookhouse and menagerie were the only canvases erected. The Fifth and S Street lot was the one used. At the runs Boss Hostler, Jimmie Gould, tied his horse. It broke away and ran down the track and was killed by an engine.

At Bloomington, Indiana conditions were more favorable as the Allen lot was elevated above the rest of the city and gave no trouble. A baby camel was born at Bloomington and was christened "Bloomington." This made two camels born within three weeks. Bloomington was Sam Dill's birthplace and he was busy renewing acquaintances. He attended its public schools and was graduated from the University of Indiana. He was the first manager of the Harris Grand Theater there, which was then managed by Roy Feltus of Shipp & Feltus fame. Dill's father and family still lived in Bloomington.

The four newspapers used all the publicity they could get, and wrote stories about Dill and the Robinson Circus.



Giraffes John and Mary inside their corral in the John Robinson Circus menagerie tent, season of 1927. Pfening Archives.

The weather has always been a problem in this territory during the early spring but it seems to have been especially rough during the mid and late 1920's on American Circus Corporation units. A decade later saw the floods along the Ohio and other rivers in the area. A circus playing its early season dates in the states of Indiana, Ohio, Illinois, northern Kentucky, and portions of West Virginia and Pennsylvania expected to encounter considerable rain and consequently mud filled lots and their adverse impact at the ticket wagon. The June 1927 issue of the *White Tops* in commenting on the bad

Concession stand inside the John Robinson Circus menagerie tent, season of 1927. Note line of cages at left rear. This shot was taken by a professional photographer at one of show's several stands in the Cincinnati area that season. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wisconsin) Photo.



weather John Robinson had experienced during its first weeks of the season said a report was out that a "camelback" trunk owned by one of the Indians on the show was the "hoodoo" causing the grief.

John Robinson moved into West Virginia for two dates Huntington and Charleston, then returned to Ohio to play Athens on May 7, which completed the second full week of the season. During the third week the show continued in Ohio at Akron and Youngstown, jumped over into Pennsylvania for New Castle, then came back into the Buckeye state to play Warren which was followed by two days in Cleveland, May 13-14.

The May 21, 1927 *Billboard* covered some of the Robinson dates in the area. The article said that at Portsmouth, Ohio, May 4, an entertainment was arranged for the Kiwanis Club luncheon at the Hurth Hotel by Dr. H.C. Ingraham, physician on the show. Irene Allen, prima donna, sang a number, and Ione Carl made a speech. Other members of the show attending the luncheon were Daisy Williams, Babe Davis and Edward Dixon, who played the role of the king in the spec and acted as announcer. Visitors at Huntington, West Virginia included Tim Dwyer, the former business manager of Sells-Floto.

The report continued by stating that the show had been getting some splendid after-notice and Wade Zumwalt's band was highly complimented at every stand. There was a late arrival at Portsmouth, the matinee performance not starting until 4:45 p.m. The Mayor of Athens, Ohio, where the show played May 7, was so pleased with the performances and conduct of the circus in that city he wired Mayor D.C. Rybolt of Akron recommending the show in the highest terms. Press agent Karl Knudson secured permission to use the recommendation in the Akron papers.

The fourth week saw the show making a second visit to Pennsylvania with stands at Conneville, Greensburgh, and New Kensington. Then the show returned to Ohio to finish out the week at Alliance, Zanesville, and Wooster.

Considerable territory was covered in the


Fifth Week with the show at Toledo on May 23 followed by a trip back to Indiana for Auburn and Fort Wayne then on into Michigan with one dayers at Jackson and Adrian and three days in Detroit, May 28-30. The middle day in Detroit was on a Sunday and the final on Monday of the sixth week which was the Memorial Day holiday.

Only a few sparse reports are found in the trade publications during this part of the route. There was one note that John Robinson had to pass up Alliance, Ohio, May 19, due to the lot being the proverbial "sea of mud." The train just moved on to the next scheduled stand in Zanesville. There was a letter from Pete Sun, former owner of Sun Bros. Circus, in the June 11, 1927 *Billboard*. Sun wrote: "Took in the John Robinson Circus in Toledo, May 23. It was quite a treat as Jerry Mugivan was with the show and was glad to meet him again, also Arthur Hopper. It is quite a big show. Business in the afternoon was good and nearly a turnaway in the evening."

It can be seen from reports like the one from Pete Sun that the show's only problem seems to have been the weather. When it was good the crowds came out and business was profitable, however the many days which were lost on account of rain and mud were heavily felt in the ledgers. The bad weather in 1927 didn't seem to let up and nearly every report in the trade publications about the show seemed to focus on that angle. The June 11, 1927 *Billboard* also had an informative article which was headed, "ROBINSON SHOW HANDICAPPED BY MUD-DY LOT IN DETROIT." It said that Jerry Mugivan, Arthur Hopper, Robert E. Hickey, William Backel and the boys on the No. 1 car were back on the lot at Detroit, Michigan, Decoration Day, where the show exhibited on the Oakland Avenue lot. The lot was very wet and muddy caused by heavy rains. Through the almost superhuman efforts of Manager Sam B. Dill and W.M. Thompson and their assistants two performances were given. The long side of the reserves was up and both ends of the blues but the water was so deep

EAST THIRD STREET, OPPOSITE ANDREWS FIELD
ONE DAY ONLY **TUESDAY, SEPT. 6**

UNIVERSALLY PLEASING
Chattanooga, Tenn. **JOHN ROBINSON'S**
CIRCUS
AUGMENTED
MENAGERIE 1/2 ZOO
RARE AND HIGHLY
VALUABLE SPECIMENS
FROM ALL
PARTS OF
WORLD



TWICE DAILY
2-P.M. 8-P.M.
DOORS OPEN
1-P.M. 7-P.M.

A LOGICAL CHOICE

John Robinson Circus used this newspaper ad featuring its new giraffes for its stand at Chattanooga, Tennessee, September 6, 1927. Pfening Archives.

on the short reserved side that not a single section could be erected with safety. Wade Zumwalt's band was jokingly called a "marine band," as the band platform was surrounded by water.

No trained wild animal acts were given, as it was impossible to spot the wagons in the deep water. The poles and greater part of the paraphernalia were "gillied" onto the lot. Dill

One of two heavy Republic Trucks the John Robinson Circus carried in 1927. Pfening Archives.



stated that it was the first time he had ever given the show with the cages loaded on the flats.

Special visitors at Detroit were Joe Donahue, general agent of Hagenbeck-Wallace; J.D. Newman, general agent of Sells-Floto, Tony Ballanger, general agent of Sparks Circus, and P.N. Branson, special agent also of Sparks. Other prominent visitors were William Horton, general agent of Ringling-Barnum and Al Butler, contracting agent of the same show; and Mrs. Dan Odom and Danny Jr., wife and son of the Hagenbeck-Wallace manager.

The show got off the lot in good time and the run was made into Ann Arbor, with a seven o'clock arrival. The Packard Street lot was found to be in excellent condition.

A final note said that Rudy Rudynoff and Johnny Correia were scoring with their acts and Benny Sturgis was moving the train very fast. R. Louis Sanderson was reported as the new mail man and played the air calliope.

Following Detroit the show played two more Michigan dates, Ann Arbor and Kalamazoo, moved into Indiana for a single stand at South Bend, June 2, then returned to Michigan for Hillsdale the next day. The final day of the sixth week found the show back in Ohio at Fremont and was heading eastward fast.

The show was now moving about very rapidly and during the Seventh Week played in four different states. The week began with the show in Erie, Pennsylvania, June 6, after a 178 mile Sunday run from Fremont. Then came a run into New York to play Jamestown the next day, the only stand played in the Empire State in 1927. The eastward trek halted and the show backtracked, going into Pennsylvania for Oil City, then back into Ohio for Ashtabula, Lorain, and Sandusky. Final stand of the week was in Fordson, Michigan, June 12, and the beginning of 13 consecutive dates in the state.

An article in the June 25, 1927 *Billboard* advised that the John Robinson Circus had at last begun to have some good weather. The show arrived late in Oil City, Pennsylvania, June 8, and it was 9 o'clock before the first wagon was off the cars. However, the show started on time. Jerry Mugivan and Bert Bowers were on hand at South Bend, Indiana, June 2.

Karl Knudson replaced Ernest Darmon as 24 hour agent at this time. Knudson was formerly press agent back with the show. Walter L. Main was Dill's guest at Ashtabula, Ohio.

The McKeone family played their home town, Erie, Pennsylvania, June 6, and renewed old acquaintances. The local papers gave them and the show excellent notices. The show made a record run from Fremont, Ohio to Erie, Pennsylvania, 178 miles in eight hours. This was due to the special efforts of assistant manager W.M. Thompson.

Final items stated that Jack Elkins, who had the tickets, had left and was replaced by George Chapin, who was now head ticket seller. The staff of ticket sellers included George Cutshall, downtown; Fred Hutchinson, white wagon; Jack Zanone, managerie;



Tom Dolan, connection; Robert Lester, Robert Moore and Mabel Parker, inside tickets.

During the eighth week it was all Michigan dates. The towns seeing John Robinson were Mt. Clemens, Port Huron, Pontiac, Lansing, Flint, and Bay City. Likewise the ninth week was filled with more Michigan stands. They were Saginaw, Alma, Ionia, Grand Rapids, Muskegon, and Benton Harbor. A prominent circus fan catching the show in Benton Harbor was CHS member Gordon Potter whose recollections of the event were printed earlier in this article.

The route next carried the show back into its home state of Indiana with engagements at Hammond and La Porte which were followed by a quick trip into Illinois and a single date in Kankakee. Then came a return to Indiana at Indianapolis and Connersville while the final stand of the week was in Hamilton, Ohio on July 2.

As was customary in the late 20's John Robinson covered Indiana and Ohio extensively. The show spent all of its eleventh week in Indiana with stands at Warsaw, Marion, Kokomo, Frankfort, Logansport, and Anderson. The show was still in that state at Muncie, July 11, as the twelfth week started. However, the show then moved over into Ohio to fill out the week at Greenville, Springfield, Dayton, Washington Court House, and Chillicothe.

After three more Ohio stands were played in the thirteenth week, Columbus, Lancaster, and Middleport, the show moved east through West Virginia to its traditional August weeks in Virginia. There were six stands in West Virginia, three in the thirteenth week, Parkersburg, Grafton and Elkins, and three in the fourteenth week, Fairmont, Clarksburg, and Morgantown. Two Pennsylvania stands, Somerset and Altoona, and one in Maryland, Cumberland, completed the week. All through the month of July reports on the show in the trade publications were severely limited.

There was an interesting note in the August 1927 *White Tops* which said that when John Robinson wanted to play Bowling Green, Kentucky, the home of CFA State Chairman, John Cartwright, the L & N Railroad nixed

Carlos Carreon's wild west aftershow performers on the John Robinson lot, season of 1927. Pfening Archives.

the idea pointing out their rail yard in the town was too congested to accommodate the circus train. Circus fan Cartwright then went into action and through his efforts the local newspapers ran stories on the situation then commented favorably on the circus in an editorial. The editorial appeared on July 8 and four days later, July 12, came word from the L & N that everything had been worked out satisfactorily and John Robinson could indeed play the town. All of this is doubly interesting by observing the time factor. The show actually played in Bowling Green on September 3 which meant that the John Robinson agent was booking it about two months in advance.

During the "dull" weeks of scarce John Robinson news there were a couple of important items concerning the show's route. It was announced it would make a return ap-

Wild animal trainer, Theodore Schroeder, and his wife with tiger cubs in the John Robinson corralled menagerie, season of 1927. Pfening Archives.



pearance in the Cincinnati area in late August, playing in Oakley on August 26 and in East End the next day. Also it was mentioned the show had signed to play in Nashville, Tennessee, September 5, and would be the first circus of the season for that city.

The beginning of what would become a very sad story over the next two seasons came in June when one of the two giraffes, the female, on Hagenbeck-Wallace died when the show was playing LaFayette, Indiana. There is a copy of a letter in the Pfening Archives dated June 20, 1927 from Jerry Mugivan in Peru, Indiana to the Sells-Floto Circus playing at Montpelier, Vermont which said that Jim Tickoom had gone to LaFayette, Indiana to pick up the Hagenbeck-Wallace giraffe cage which was left there and would return some time tomorrow. A penciled post script by Mugivan advised that show's female giraffe had died in LaFayette.

The August 1927 *White Tops* informed that Sells-Floto lost one of their giraffes at Lynn, Massachusetts. Thus it had started, the new giraffes which all of the ACC shows had exhibited so proudly at the start of the 1927 season would die off rather quickly, one by one, until all were gone with the exception of the other Hagenbeck-Wallace animal which grew into full maturity and saw many years of circus trouping. Both of the John Robinson giraffes lasted throughout 1927 but both would depart to animal Valhalla the next season. Likewise the other Sells-Floto animal soon perished. (Author's note. Unfortunately both of the John Robinson giraffes were dead before I saw the show in 1928 and it would be another six year wait before I ever laid eyes on this curious beast, in the 1934 Hagenbeck-Wallace menagerie. Nowadays, with so many top flight zoos and wild animal parks, many of them housing more than a half dozen or more giraffes, it's difficult to remember how truly scarce these animals were back in the late 20's. Before I had ever seen one I was in high school and already heard the age old quip—"Belly up to the bar boys," the giraffe told his friends, "the high balls are on me.")

On the first day of August the traditional Virginia tour began at Winchester as the fifteenth week of the season began. Other stands in the Old Dominion state during the week were at Harrisonburg, Lexington, Staunton, Charlottesville, and Fredericksburg. Likewise the sixteenth week saw nothing but Virginia dates, Richmond, Newport News, Norfolk, Petersburg, Lynchburg, and Roanoke. Going on into the seventeenth week the show remained in the state for East Radford, Marion, and Bristol, then went into Tennessee for Johnson City and Kingsport, and returned to Virginia to play Northon, on August 20, which was the final date in the state. The route then called for a backtrack into West Virginia at Bluefield and Williamson and then on to Ohio for Ironton, Hillsboro, and two days in the Cincinnati area as the eighteenth week of the season became history.

May Wirth

I am seeking useful information on the life of this great equestrienne to include in a biography that I am now preparing for publication. Although May was born in Australia in 1894 she spent most of her career in the United States. She made her American debut with Barnum and Bailey in New York in 1912. I understand that she retired from active riding in 1938. She died in Florida in 1978. I am also interested in acquiring information concerning the principal rider in her troupe, Phil St. Leon Wirth. Any information provided shall be gratefully acknowledged. Please write to—

Mark St. Leon
172/392 Jones Street
Ultimo 2007 NSW, Australia

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Circus newspaper ads from 1850s-1930s
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Bring what circus material you have to trade to the
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"WE PAY AS WE GO"

The Stowe Bros. Circus - A Real Family Tradition

PART TWO

By John F. Polacsek

In the previous article the first generation of the Stowe family was identified, and their careers as circus proprietors were followed. The second generation Stowe family came into prominence during the late 1870's when the young men followed in their fathers' footsteps.

The first family members to come into the limelight were Mr. and Mrs. William H. Stowe, who had married in 1877 after she was divorced from the equestrian Harry Codona. Mrs. Stowe's stage name was Signora Lizzie Marcellus, and she had been educated in equestrian management by the great clown Dan Rice. She was one of eight featured lady riders on the 1877 P. T. Barnum Circus. William H. Stowe held the position of clown assistant to another female equestrian on the show which opened that year at Gilmore's Garden in New York City, where they performed from April 9 until May 5 indoors. The tenting season took the show across the country, and the season ended with a stand in Philadelphia from October 31 to November 3.

The Stowes decided that a change was due, and in the spring of 1878 joined the John H. Murray Circus. Murray had recently sold his circus train of 10 to 15 cars to W.C. Coup, and then chartered the Steamer *Ellen Knight*. Murray was developing a nautical circus and planned to travel on the 155-foot-long screw steamer that was built in Philadelphia in 1863. She was not a new vessel, but her owner found that it could be profitable to be chartered to a circus for a season.

The John H. Murray Railroad Circus boarded the steamer at College Point, Long Island, on May 18, and cast off from the dock. The Stowes were familiar with this mode of transportation as they both had sailed the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers and the Great Lakes just a few years prior. The show progressed up the Atlantic coast, and used the "Railroad" title probably because they had some advertising left from the previous year. The show performed at Bath, Maine—June 4; Rockland—5; Camden—6; Belfast—7; Bangor—8; Bucksport—10; Ellsworth—11; and Machias—12. The show skirted along the coast and entered Canadian waters with shows at Truro, Nova Scotia—July 15; New Glasgow—16; Picton—17; Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island—18 and 19; Sommerside—20; Shediac, New Brunswick—22; Chatham—23; New Castle—24; Petitediac—25; Sussex—26; Hampton—27; and Fredericton—29.¹

The performance at Fredericton presented Signora Lizzie Marcellus, Wooda Cook, James Melville, Senorita Millie Tournour,

Little Alexander, and William O'Dell as the featured equestrians. As it turned out, Lizzie Marcellus and Wooda Cook were old friends as they had both been featured as juvenile performers on the 1871 Paris Pavillion Circus operated by Dan Rice. William Stowe and Grimaldi Bibb acted as the clowns, while "Professor" Stowe returned to present his educated canines. Oscar Perry led the band outside the big top before the free attraction took place. Professor Wambold performed the perilous feat of ascending upon a single wire the distance of 100 feet from the ground to the top of the centre pole. The show was well received as the crowds cheered the riding acts and laughed at the antics of the clowns.²

The Murray Circus continued its excursion along the Atlantic coast and ended up the season on November 1 at Astoria, Long Island. Just a few weeks earlier it was noted in the *Clipper* that W.H. Stowe and his wife Lizzie Marcellus were still with the John H. Murray Show and were not engaged by the American Circus.³

Lizzie Marcellus, misspelled in this 1878 Warren, Maine, newspaper ad for John H. Murray's boat show, was the stage name of Mrs. William H. Stowe. Pfening Archives.

GRAND GALA DAY AT WARREN, WEDNESDAY, MAY 29TH. JOHN H. MURRAY'S GRAND CIRCUS.



MR. MURRAY takes pleasure in announcing the return of his MAGNIFICENT CIRCUS to the United States, after a prosperous tour of the entire West Indies, and last from Havana, Cuba, being everywhere greeted with ever-flowing audiences who universally pronounce his Grand Circus the

Best that ever Visited their Country.
Leading and only Purely
LEGITIMATE
EQUESTRIAN ESTABLISHMENT

In America. The only circus that performs all its adventures! The cherished institution of the people for the Amusement of the Young.

MR. MURRAY takes pleasure in announcing a partial list of his Artists for the Season, and also stating that his present Company is far superior to any heretofore under his management.

MISS LIZZIE MARCELLAS.

The Beautiful, Unapproachable and Thoroughly Schooled Equestrienne.

JAMES MELVILLE.

The Great Australian Bare-Back Rider

Senorita MILLIE TOURNOUR

Equestrienne and Queen of the air.

WOODA COOK,

Beyond dispute the Champion Somersault

Rider of the World.

LITTLE ALEXANDER, the Wonder of

the age, in his exciting burlesque act on two

diminutive ponies.

Professor STOWE'S wonderful Troupe of

Edgewood Dogs.

WM. O'DELL, the Great American Bare Back

Trick and Somersault Rider.

WILL STOWE, the American Clown

and Jester.

GERMALDI BIBB, the World's Clown

and Pantomime.

Participating in the Athletic Trials of

Skill are such sterling actors as EU-

GENE LEECH, CLIFFORD LEOP-

ARD, the renowned KIT CARSON,

COOKS, HEGTOR, FANE, SMITH,

EDWARDS, CASTELL, WALKER

and acrobats.

Fifteen Trick Horses.



and the beautiful BLACK BESS, the best trained and most valuable kind of Horse on this Continent.

The splendid Brass band will be under the leadership of Mr. Oscar Perry, whose reputation as a leader is famous in the land. The members of his band are

picked men, selected with the greatest care and who will accomplish all that music hath charms to. Their selections will be the most popular of the day.

2 Grand Free Pages.

This confusion existed because another Stowe, in this case Frank H. Stowe, was engaged on the Great American Circus, under the management of Miles Orton. The Great American Circus and Monster Coliseum opened the season at Greenville, Michigan, on June 17, 1878. The show reportedly was framed around the bareback riding of Miles Orton, the clowning of Al G. Field, the gymnastics of the Bensleys, and the trained dog act of F.H. Stowe. Frank was also the leader of the band. One report stated that the "street parade was poor, but they give a good show."

A number of changes occurred that season on the show. W.W. Nichols joined the show June 11, while the Bensley gymnasts left the show on the 15th. The route through Michigan found them in Saranac—June 19, Millvale—20, Ludington—21, Allegan—22, and Manistee—26. The show was to then board a steamer where they would go around the Straits of Mackinaw and open in Milwaukee July 4. It then was to proceed down Lake Michigan to Chicago, where they were to transfer to wagons for a sojourn through Ohio and Indiana.⁴

Towards the end of October the Great American Circus finished the season by performing at Michigan City, Indiana—October 7, Three Oaks, Michigan—8, Buchanan—9, Edwardsburg—10, Vandalia—11, Marcellus—12, Wicksburg—14, Union City—15, and Detroit—19. Miles Orton had his winterquarters nearby at Norris, and the show was to reorganize and to be shipped south for a fall and winter tour.⁵

For this extended season reports circulated that the show was to consist of Miles Orton and family, Bob DeBar as clown, James Bensley on the horizontal bar, barrels, and crystal pyramid, the Mette Brothers as acrobats, and F.H. Stowe with his trained dogs. Wooda Cook and wife from the Murray Circus and Lizzie Marcellus were also reported to be joining the show, and it was here that the confusion came into being.⁶

Keeping track of which Stowe was on what show was difficult, for in 1878 there was a third family member, James B. Stowe, on the Adam Forepaugh Zoological and Equestrian Aggregation. The show opened on the west coast on March 29 at Haywards, California, and then proceeded to head east. James Stowe was an agile acrobat and was setting records that year. One day his father, Eliakim Stowe, received a copy of the Eureka, Nevada, *Daily Sentinel*, which contained an account of the longest somersault leap on record. When the show played Eureka on May 13 and 14, James Stowe successfully

completed a 33-foot leap over five elephants and two horses.⁷ The show then came east with performances from October 7-12 at St. Louis, Missouri, before they made winter quarters at Louisville, Kentucky.

Returning to the travels of William H. Stowe and wife, they stayed with the John H. Murray Circus and in December 1878 set sail from New York for a tour of the West Indies. The "Ocean Circus," as it was called, boarded the small 130-foot-long steamer *Acadia*, which was built in 1863 at Norwich, Connecticut. As was the custom the baggage was stowed below and the livestock and wagons left on the deck teathered in place, usually under temporary shelters. The show people made do with limited accommodations both above and below the main deck.

The show arrived at Hamilton, Bermuda, on December 14, played a two-day stand December 16 and 17, then sailed the 18th for St. Thomas. A strong gale overtook the vessel, and some of the heavy wagons had to be thrown overboard to prevent the boat from foundering. Eleven horses were also lost overboard during the storm, whether by accident or intention, it is unknown.⁸ The circus arrived at St. Thomas, West Indies, on December 22, and determined that the show must go on. They commenced three performances a day from December 25 until they closed on the 28th.

The show packed up and sailed to Georgetown British Guiana, with all members of the company well after the tedious Christmas holiday workout. At the engagement at Georgetown, a two-sided 8½ x 11 inch pink single sheet program proclaimed their performance:

O. P. Perry's Band played the overture
Linda Jeal on the running globe
Athletic acts by the members of the company

John Barry with a principal act
W.H. Stowe in his featured comic song,
WHOA, EMMA!

Mlle. Georgiana the lady with the iron jaw
John H. Murray with the twin ponies
MARS & JUPITER

10-minute intermission
Second overture by the band
W. Milson and a leap for life
Lizzie Marcellus, the featured equestrienne doing flights over streamers, banners, and through balloons. Her riding was clowned by W.F. Aymar, who held up balloons and hoops from the ring bank

W. O'Dale, the famous manipulator of globes and Maltese Cross

W.H. Stowe's Educated Canines
Linda Jeal, the champion lady hurdle rider, on a naked horse

Perry's Band playing "God Save the Queen" as a finale.⁹

The show then sailed north and performed at Santiago de Cuba on March 8 and 9, but whether they were to go to Key West, Florida, or make a stand in Havana, Cuba, was uncertain. A letter from William H. Stowe to the *Clipper* solved the mystery as the show steamed for Haiti, where they opened to light business on March 14. The West Indies tour was about to end, and Stowe noted that he and Lizzie Marcellus were engaged by P.T.



Wooda Cook was an old friend of Mrs. Stowe. They trouped together as children on Dan Rice, and were both with John Murray in 1878. Hertzberg collection, San Antonio Public Library.

Barnum and expected in New York City on April 4.¹⁰

Late in March John H. Murray's Ocean Circus sailed back to the United States and arrived on March 29 in St. Augustine, Florida. After two days of performances they departed for Jacksonville for a show on April 1 and closed the season at Fernandina on April 2. The Stowes arrived in New York on April 5.

While the fortunes of the Stowes were looking up, John H. Murray was in the midst of financial difficulties. On May 3, 1879, the complete equipment of the John H. Murray Ocean Circus was sold at auction in Mott Haven, New York. All the tents, wagons, horses, and ponies were put on the auction block. The results were as follows:

Heavy wagon - \$20
Centre-pole wagon - \$30
Ticket wagon - \$35
Two gray ponies - \$200
Dark bay pony stallion NED - \$67.50
Trick pony CHUB - \$65
Small brown pony JOHN - \$70
Black pony BILL - \$100
Black pony GENERAL (partner of BILL) - \$90
Two 2 year old ponies - \$37.50 & \$45
Pony mare ROSE and day old colt - \$95
Pony BLACK KATE and young colt - \$95
Pony BLUE DICK - \$100
Two trick mules - \$27.50 & \$17.50
Two work horses - \$30 & \$75
Gray mare FANNY (a work horse that was promoted in the Indies to a ring horse) - \$100
Bareback horse SEAL - \$425
Hurdle horse PRINCE - \$225
Gilded Chariot (Mr. Murray declared it cost \$4,700) - \$100
Centre-pole, jacks, rings, stakes - \$100
Fourteen pony harnesses - \$42.50.¹¹
While John H. Murray was on a downward slide, P.T. Barnum was expanding his "New

and Greatest Show on Earth." The show opened at the American Institute in New York City on April 12, and continued indoors until the 26th. The program for the show listed the Stowes in two major acts. The 5th act was a principal equestrian act performed by Signora Marcellus, and it was clowned by James Holloway. The 11th act was performed by Madame Dockrill, the Empress of the Arena, in her great flying sensational act—"The Sprite of the Rainbow"—and was clowned by William H. Stowe.

Mlle. Linda Jeal, "the great and only female hurdle rider," was also on the show coming over from the Murray Circus. Not only were some acquaintances on the Barnum Circus, but the show train was also playing some familiar territory. On June 11, the enterprising Barnum played at Frederickton, New Brunswick, laying great stress on his equestrian exhibits. The equestriennes included Madame Dockrill, Linda Jeal, Emma Lake, Katie Stokes, Signora Marcellus, Signora Quaglinna, Miss Smithson, and Miss Ashley. The Barnum show had a good season and closed on October 18 at New Brunswick, New Jersey, and ran the cars into nearby Bergen for the winter.

The Stowes closed in New Jersey on a Saturday, and on Monday October 20 opened in New York for a short season with the New York Circus under the direction of L.B. Lent. A new circus building was constructed at 728 and 730 Broadway below 8th Street after the famed New York Circus at 14th Street. Every seat in the orchestra, orchestra circle, and balcony was a luxurious opera chair, and an all-star cast of leading professionals was under the direction of Mr. John H. Murray.¹²

Among the ensemble was the charming equestrienne, Miss Lizzie Marcellus, and Mr. William H. Stowe, the polished jester and dispenser of polite witticism who also presented a troupe of educated canines. The show also featured Signor Sebastian, the dashing bareback equestrian; Master Quiglianti, the youthful horseman, Miss Emma Lake (from the Barnum Circus), the queen of the menage with her stud of



William H. Stowe in clown costume, cr. 1880. Berrien County Historical Association collection, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

thoroughbred and high leaping horses. Equestrian acts were numerous as the show presented Miss Pauline Lee, the only lady juggler on horseback; Mr. William Gorman, the daring hurdle rider; and the surprising somersault rider, Mr. William Aymar. Dan and Charles Brien were the two comics, while Senorita Millie Turnour was the bravest woman in the world performing on the flying trapeze. Matinees were Wednesday and Saturday beginning at 2:00 p.m., while the night performance began at 8:00 p.m., one hour after the doors opened to the public.¹³ The Stowes stayed for a short period, then decided to head south.

While William and Lizzie were on board a steamer headed for Cuba late in 1879, Frank H. Stowe was headed north after spending the season as the band master on the John Robinson Circus. He opened with the show on April 14 at Fulton, Ohio. It was a good show, with 42 cages of wild animals in the menagerie, and three elephants—Chief, Mary, and Prince. The show was under the watchful eye of John Robinson, Jr. while Gil Robinson was the general manager and Frank Robinson acted as the treasurer. The show did not call it a season until December 23 at Baton Rouge, Louisiana. They sold all the stock except for the ring horses; then boarded a steamboat for the trip back to winter quarters in Cincinnati.¹⁴

William and Lizzie ended up in Havana, Cuba, where they were engaged by the Orrin Brothers Circus. Both the canine review and her equestrian performance were excellent additions to the show. In late January 1880 it was noted in the *Clipper* that Lizzie Marcellus, "that skillful and dashing equestrienne," had been engaged for another season on the P.T. Barnum Show. It was also noted that the "Queen of the Arena" was to

spend two more weeks with the Orrin Circus before returning to the United States. At that time the Stowe's address would be 256 East 13th Street, New York, for those who wished to correspond.¹⁵

Upon returning to New York, they reported for the rehearsals that the "One and Only Greatest Show On Earth" had arranged. With P.T. Barnum as proprietor and George F. Bailey as general manager, the show opened April 8 at the New York American Institute and performed until the 24th. About the only real difference between the 1879 and 1880 show as far as the Stowes were concerned was that the program lists as act #6 Signora Marcellus, in her classical principal act, being clowning by Mr. John Robinson. William Stowe was clowning the principal act presented by Madame Dockrill in act #12. The finale of the show was a performance by Zazel, in her daring aerial dive or "eagle swoop" fired from the mouth of a cannon to the topmost height of the pavilion. The season ended on November 6 at Washington, Missouri, and the train brought the show back to the Bridgeport, Connecticut, winterquarters.

Frank Stowe was still active in 1880 and he had the position of band leader on the Prof. E. Hamilton's New York Circus out of Windsor Mills, Ashtabula County, Ohio. The show was out for 22 weeks and the route was as follows:

June 1—Curwinsville, Pa.
June 2—Cleanfield
June 3—Phillipsburg
June 4—Tyrone
June 5—Williamsburg
June 7—Martinsburg
June 8—Bediovd
June 9—Everett
June 10—Huntington
June 14—McConnellsburg
June 15—Mercersburg
June 16—Greencastle
June 17—Waynesboro
June 18—Emmitsburg, Md.
June 19—Gettysburg, Pa.
June 21—Littlestown
June 22—Hanover
June 23—Westminister, Md.
June 28—Middleton
June 29—Lovettsville, Va.
June 30—Leesburg
July 1—Snickersville
July 2—Berryville
July 3—Winchester
July 5—Middletown
July 6—Woodstock
July 7—New Market
July 8—Luray
July 9—Culpepper Ct. House
August 10—Milton, N.C. (Across the creek from the town as it was an \$100 license to show in the town)
August 11—South Boston, Va.
August 12—Clarksville
August 13—Boyden
August 14—Chase City
August 16—Keysville
September 11—Williamsport, Md.
September 13—Clear Springs
September 14—Hancock
October 2—Parker's Landing, Pa.

The 1880 season of Prof. Hamilton's Circus did not end on a good note. The show played at Parker's Landing, Pennsylvania, on Saturday, October 2, and the performers were notified that the manager did not have enough money to pay off all the salaries. Mr. Hamilton stated that after the last performance he was to receive \$1,000 from a Mr. Skinner of Windsor Corners, Ohio, to pay off the show folks. Acting on good faith, the performers and working men put the show in shape to ship it by rail to winterquarters and retired for the evening.¹⁶

With the coming of the dawn it was discovered that the manager had skipped town and had left the show equipment to be shipped that same day. The showmen were in a quandry as to what to do. It was Sunday, and they were unable to attach the show property that soon left by rail. Frank Stowe, the leader of the six-piece band, and some performers decided to take action. After being tricked out of his \$700, Frank canvassed the company and found that there was about \$250 among the people. They then sent representatives to Ohio to get paid in full or attach the property of a certain Mr. Hamilton. The end result was a public auc-

James B. Stowe was a noted leaper on the Great Forepaugh Show in 1878. Pfening Archives.

Fulton, Friday, July 12th, 1878.

THE GRAND MARDI GRAS CARNIVAL!

Two Performances Daily. Doors open at 1 and 7 P. M. Admission to the Entire Eight Center Pole Tents as Usual.

Only First-Class Show Ever in Iowa!

Everything New, Beautiful and Grand. The World's

GREAT FOREPAUGH SHOW!

Circus, Museum, Aquarium, Menagerie, Etc.,

COMING WITH

MY OWN THIRTY-FOUR PALACE BUILT CARS!

(Equal in length to Fifty C. & N. W. Cars.)

Featuring the Finest Private Railway Equipment in America.

THE

Baby Elephant,

"Chicago!"

Born in

Germany, Pa., Feb. 22, 77

THE

Only Elephant

BORN

In America!!

THE INDIA ELEPHANT PYRAMID,

As Performed by the Only Group of Five Performing Elephants owned by any

Man in the World.

Trained and Performed by ADDIE FOREPAUGH, Jr.

The Only SEVEN Elephants Ever Seen with a Show!

AN EXTRAORDINARY COLLECTION

OF

Rare and Curious Wild Beasts!

Only \$50,000 Male

HIPPOPOTAMUS

Ever exhibited in America. The BEHEMOTH

of Holy Writ. "Behold he drinketh up a river

and beareth him in his mouth. He can draw up

Jordan in his mouth."—Job, xl, 25.

Arctic Ocean Sea Lions, Polar Bears,

Caribou, and in all

1500 Rare Wild Animals!!

THE CROWNING TRIUMPH!

The Mardi Gras Triumphant Street Pageant!

A Scene of Poetry, Beauty and Gayety! The Grandest Night Ever Beheld!

\$50,000 Worth of Colossal Chariots.

Musical in proportion, Artistic in design, richly decorated with carved Zoological, Mythological

and Equestrian Figures of life-size—Historic, Representative and Edificatory.

The Carnival of Vast and Varied Art, will appear daily in the public street; Forty

center, Palace Wagon—Music Military Band—Grand Chariots—Palace Wagon—Band of the

Air—Dancers of the Jungle, as in the "Palmers of Old," in Colossal Proportion—Carnival of Gre-

atious Characters—Old King and his Twelve Jolly Pages, etc., together with the entire

combination of 4-Paw's World's Great Show. The costumes used were made by Jaquet, of Paris,

and are not only of the most brilliant but bear a striking historical character.

AGIGANTIC COMBINATION! All under Eight Center-Pole Tents.

4-Paw's World Great Show Never Divides!

John A. and Addie Forepaugh, Managers.

tion of show property on November 30 at Windsor Mills, Ohio.¹⁷

The end of the 1880 season saw both of the Stowes headed south for an extended season, as Frank Stowe migrated to Louisiana, where he framed a show of his own. His show performed at Donaldsonville, Louisiana, on February 14 with 30 performers listed in the company. The performers included the Irwin Brothers, the Lee Brothers, Signor Diablo, and George Richards with the side show.¹⁸ Little is known of the route during the winter months.

We next find Mr. and Mrs. W.H. Stowe attached to the W.T. Thornton Circus late in 1880. The show opened in 1879 at Cairo, Illinois, and played the midwest and south while traveling by wagon, steamboat, and rails. W.T. Thornton's Famous Berlin Museum, Menagerie, and Cosmopolitan Allied Show was last seen at LaGrange, Texas on October 2, 1880, then disappeared. It was during this period that the Stowes joined the show.

The show was headed for New Orleans, but only made it as far as Algiers, Louisiana, across the Mississippi River from the Crescent City. A correspondent to the *Clipper* noted that Thornton "jumped the show" the previous night, going to his home in Shelbyville, Illinois. He left some 109 people destitute, and at that time the Stowes attached the show for \$1,400. The show was put up at a sheriff's sale on January 18, and William H. Stowe purchased the entire circus and menagerie for \$1,200 to settle his own attachment. He then made known his intention to refit the show and start from New Orleans by rail about March 1. Storage and stables were secured on Rampart Street, and the job of overhauling the paraphernalia of the Thornton Circus began.¹⁹

W.H. Stowe at that time needed a star attraction, and he saw one in the form of Dan Rice, the great clown. Dan had been out of the circus business for the previous two years, then suddenly decided to become involved in a floating palace.

A theatre was built upon the steamer *Champion #9*, a 202-foot-long, 36-foot-wide vessel that was built in 1875 at Cincinnati, Ohio. The performance consisted of drama, pantomime, and music, and the show opened at Paducah, Kentucky, October 7, 8, 9, 1880. The show then steamed downstream to Cape Girardeau, Missouri, and down the Mississippi River.²⁰ The vessel was modified to hold an auditorium which was 140 feet long, including the stage, which was 24 feet deep and 34 feet wide. The theatre had two electric lights and was lighted inside by gas manufactured onboard.²¹ Rice used a small advertising boat called the *Star of the West* in advance of his floating palace and the vessel brought word to the citizens of Memphis, Tennessee that the show was coming for a four-day stand opening October 26. When the *Champion #9* came to the dock, Captain J.C. Oates of Memphis was in charge of the steamboat.²²

Wet weather that fall caused poor business on the Lower Mississippi, and Dan Rice was in financial trouble. In the United States District Court of New Orleans on February



P. T. BARNUM'S DAILY PROGRAMME

"New and Greatest Show on Earth."

For the Week ending Saturday, May 31st. 1879.

P. T. BARNUM, - - SOLE PROPRIETOR. | G. F. BAILEY, - - GENERAL MANAGER.

L.S.L.

UNPRECEDENTED ATTRACTION
Over Half a Million Distributed.

Louisiana State Lottery Company.

This institution was regularly incorporated by the Legislature of the State for Educational and Charitable purposes in 1868, for the term of Twenty-five Years, to which institution the inevitable faith of the State is pledged, with a capital of \$1,000,000, to which it has since added a reserve fund of \$250,000. ITS GRAND SINGLE NUMBER DRAWING will take place monthly. It never fails or postpones. Look at the following:

GRAND PROMENADE CONCERT.
during which will take place the
100th GRAND MONTHLY

AND THE

Extraordinary Semi-Annual DRAWING.

At New Orleans, Tuesday, June 17th, 1879.

Under the personal supervision and management of

Gen. G. T. DEARBORN, of Louisiana,

and Gen. J. A. EARLY, of Virginia.

CAPITAL PRIZE, \$100,000

1000 Tickets at \$1.00 each.

1000 Tickets at \$1.00 each.

1000 Tickets at \$1.00 each.

1000 Tickets at \$1.00 each.

1000 Tickets at \$1.00 each.

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Programme.

This Programme is subject to alteration.

M. WILLIAM E. SINCLAIR, Treasurer.
Mr. JAMES COOKE, Equestrian Director.
Mr. JOSEPH WITKES, Leader of Orchestra.

1. GORGEOUS PROCESSIONAL PAGEANT
AND ORIENTAL ENTREE.

Do not fail to see the Greatest of Concerts, endorsed by P. T. Barnum.

2. Introduction of LIVING CURIOSITIES—

a The Tattooed Greek Nobleman Captain COSTEN-
TENUS.

b Col. GOSHEN, the Palestine Giant.

c Miss MARIAN KENNEDY, Extraordinary Queen.

The Two-Headed Child, or St. Basil's Twins, to be seen only in the
Amuse Pavilion.

3. Introduction of the Royal Stallions MAMALUK
and PASHA, by Mr. CARL ANTONY.

4. Golden Table and Globe Act, by WM. O'DALE
STEVEN.

Whistler (the Humourist), the Tutors, Dick Sands, Bingham (the Ven-
triquetist), and only Performing Baby Elephant in the Great Concert.

5. Principal Equestrian Act, Signora MARCELLUS
CLOWE, JAMES HOLLOWAY.

6. ASTONISHING FEATS OF MAGIC—the
Wonderful EGYPTIAN JUGGLERS.

Many Living Wonders, led by the living Two-Headed Child, in the
Amuse Pavilion.

7. Principal Sensation Bareback Act—Miss KATIE
STOKER.

Clown, CHARLIE SEELEY.

From the BOSTON SUNDAY HERALD.
JAN. 10th, 1878.

A REVOLUTION

In Trusts and Supporters.

The well known DR. LUBIN has just invented a new

method of treating the system, which gives more

than eight points of advantage over all others, and with

which to challenge the world. He is now applying them

to make room for his improved kind.

He has also invented a "True" for capture at the naval,

which he claims as being the only True that will hold

the system completely.

CAUTION.—Beware of the men that are imitating

his signs to mislead the "s" as of his. Remember the

Address—

DR. LUBIN, No. 1 Tremont Temple.

The Name is on the Door.

His Inventions are all Patented and Can Only be Secured

of himself.

The most refreshingly cool and delicate

Lemonade, the choicest Candies and a

splendid assortment of Fruits, Nuts, &c.,

will be found at the Candy Stand

The Great Sovereign Curative!

PULVERMACHER'S
ELECTRIC BELTS

AND BANDS.

ARE SELF-APPLICABLE TO ANY PART OF THE BODY, for the

speedy and efficacious cure of

RHEUMATISM, NEURALGIA, DYSPEPSIA, NERVOUS

DERELITY, LIVER COMPLAINT, KIDNEY

DISEASE, FEMALE COMPLAINTS,

NERVOUSNESS, URINARY DISEASES, GENERAL ILL-

HEALTH, WASTING DECAY, EPILEPSY,

PARALYSIS, SPINAL DISEASES, INDIGESTION,

And other Chronic Affections.

Sent for DESCRIPTIVE PAMPHLET and THE ELECTRIC QUARTERLY

a large Illustrated Journal, containing full particulars. Copies mailed

free. Address—

PULVERMACHER GALVANIC CO.

Cor. Eight and Vine Sts., Cincinnati, Ohio,

or 1164 Broadway, New York.

Do not avoid bogus appliances claiming electric qualities. Our

pamphlet explains how to distinguish the genuine from the

spurious.

French's Hotel

EUROPEAN PLAN.

Opposite City Hall, Court House and

New Post Office,

NEW YORK.

PRICES REDUCED.

ROOMS

75 CENTS AND UPWARDS.

THIS HOTEL has all modern improvements, in-

cluding Elevators, Gas, Running Water, and Bur-

ghol Proof Locks on every door. It is convenient

to all Theatres, and within three minutes walk of

both the Elevated Railroad Station. House Cars

can be procured at the City Hall for \$2.00

per hour, per day \$10.00, per week \$60.00

per month \$200.00

per year \$2,000.00

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ty acts for the new show. The advertisement in the *Clipper* noted that he was to be in town for only five days and that talent was wanted.²⁴

</

Mr. Robert Stickney, champion rider of the world; John Barry, the great somersault and bareback rider; Mlle. Marcellus, the premier equestrienne and empress of the arena; Mlle Ella Stokes, the champion bareback and menage equestrienne; and Dan Rice, clown, jester, and the nation's humorist. The show opened Sunday evening at Congo Square, just as advertised and in a chilly drizzling rain some 6,000 people filled the tent to overflowing that first performance.²⁷

The ring performance consisted of the noted clown, Dan Rice, the equestrian performers, Robert Stickney, Lizzie Marcellus, Miss Ella Stokes, John Barry, and Mons. Bell; William H. Stowe was the singing and knockabout clown, while acrobatics were performed by the three Nagle Brothers, the Spears, and Mr. Burt. Miss Lena Lewis was a menage rider, Signor Leonti performed on a ladder of swords, Prof. Bisham Maxwell a top notch juggler, Bartlett & Read were tumblers, George DeHaven an extraordinary contortionist, and Prof. Morris presented the educated canines. The concert was performed by Stelia and Minnie Bertham, Lillie Rice, Andrew Spears, Mr. Morris, George Gortchious, Charles Bell, and Walter Mach.²⁸

A review of the new circus from the *New Orleans Times Picayunes* after the opening performance stated:

"The new tent spread for the return of Dan Rice to the sawdust ring, after an absence of two years, was crowded last night for the performance on Congo Square. Dan was himself again, and kept his audience full of the good humor which overflowed from his genial nature. There is nothing very colossal about the Rice aggregation of allied shows, yet the riding of Robert Stickney was excellent and that of Miss Marcellus was as good as that of many better advertised performers. Miss Stokes will do better when her horse is better trained. Prof. Morris exhibited a very well trained troupe of dogs. The trick clowns and acrobats showed themselves to be good performers."²⁹

The roster of the show included:
Dan Rice—manager
J. C. Oates—business manager
William H. Stowe—equestrian manager
Andrew Spears—ringmaster
Major G.W. Morris—general agent—
railroad contractor
Clem Davis—contracting agent
Frank DeSare—press agent
Burt Stowe (William's brother)—
manager of the concert

There were two band chariots, which carried two full bands under Prof. Weldon, along with one tableau chariot, and some 80 head of horses all told. Three canvasses were used—a 146-foot big top, a 110-foot menagerie top, and an 80-foot museum top. Two sideshow tents housed the added attractions, while the stock was kept in three horse tents. The performers used one cooking tent and one sleeping tent. The equipment of the show consisted of eleven cages of animals, with six more arriving along with some horses February 25 from New York on the steamer *Mary Houston*. For transportation there were 24 railroad cars, 2 coaches, and 1 special Pullman sleeper.³⁰

The Rice Circus continued to have big

EW YORK CIRCUS,

L. B. Lent, Director.

28 & 730 Broadway, below 8th St.



SEASON OPENS.
Monday, Oct. 20

Mr. L. B. Lent for seven years director of the famed New York Circus at Fourteenth Street, takes pleasure in announcing his return to management in the admirably located buildings 728 & 730 Broadway, which have been reconstructed upon the most liberal scale. Every seat in the Orchestra, Orchestra Circle and Balcony being a

Luxurious Opera Chair.
While all the appliances combine to make the circle the best ever adapted to acrobatic amusement in the city. The

STAR ARTISTS.
Are the Leading Lights of the Profession; the entertainment presented under the direction of

Mr. JOHN H. WILKINSON.

SIG. SEBASTIAN,

Dashing Bareback Equestrian.

MAST. QUIGLIANI,

The Youthful Horseman.

MISS EMMA LAKE,

Queen of the Menage, with her Stud of Thoroughbred and high-leaping horses.

MISS L. MARCELLUS,

Charming Equestrienne.

MISS PAULINE LEE,

Only Lady Juggler on Horseback.

WM. GORMAN,

Daring Bareback Rider.

WM. AYMAR,

Surprising Somersault Rider.

WILL H. STOW,

Polished Jester and dispenser of political wisdom with his troupe of

EDUCATED CANINES.

W. FRED AYMAR,

Clown and Vocalist.

DAN & CHAS. BRIEN,

The Two Comedians.

LEVANTINE & EARL,

Proficient Classic Gymnasts.

Senorita Millie Turnour

The bravest Woman in the World on the Flying Trapeze.

HARRY LAMBKIN,

Wonderful Dancing Globes, Barrel and Table.

Fred McCarty, Harry Carey, John Kerman and

Morosco Corps

OF ATHLETES. The ensemble combining the BEST CIRCUS IN THE WORLD. The Program presenting many novel features never before presented in the arena.

Matinees, Wednesday & Saturday

MATINEES. Doors open at 1. Begins at 2. NIGHT—Doors open at 7. Begins at 8.

POPULAR PRICES. Admission to Orchestra, Orchestra Circle and Balcony, (Overhead) 50c; Reserved Seats, 75c; 1st Class, 1.00; 2nd Class, 75c; 3rd Class, 50c; Children, 25c; Concessions, 10c.

After the Barnum show closed in 1879, Mr. and Mrs. William H. Stowe joined Lewis Lent's winter circus in New York city. Both of them are mentioned in the handbill. Hertzberg collection, San Antonio Public Library.

business, and they featured the Morosco family of four acrobats in March, along with the addition of new ring horses and trick mules. Signor Virona joined with his dancing balls, magic globe, and other sensational acts. The circus moved from Congo Square after a two-week run, and opened March 6 at Ogden Park in the upper portion of New Orleans for two nights.

After the final performance in New Orleans the Dan Rice Circus loaded up and spent the next few months on the railroad lines of the South. The show performed at Mobile, Alabama, March 21; Pensacola, Florida, March 23; Greenville, Alabama, March 24; and a two-day stand at Montgomery, on March 25 and 26. The show then headed north for dates at Birmingham, March 28; Decatur, March 29; Columbus, Tennessee; March 30; Nashville, March 31; Franklinton, April 1; and Russellville, Kentucky, April 2. The show reportedly ended its trek by rails at Rich-

mond, Virginia, May 8, where they took to wagons, becoming a mud show for the remainder of the season.³¹

By August of 1881 another change was in the offing as a separation was coming. At Albion, Pennsylvania, on August 6 a new flag flew from the center pole of the big top, this one proclaiming the circus title of William H. Stowe. It appeared to be a friendly separation between Dan Rice and William Stowe. Possibly Dan Rice's divorce from his wife Rebecca had something to do with the retiring of the circus clown from the business, and he gave his blessing to the venture.³²

The show crossed the border into Ohio performing at Burton—August 8; Bloomfield—17, Warsaw—18, Walholding—19, Danville—20, Fredericktown—21, Richwood—28, West Liberty—29, and Eaton—September 5.

The route through Ohio allowed the show to boast of packed houses filled to their utmost and the firm as financially sound as the rock of ages. The company during the month of August consisted of the following:

Wm. H. Stowe—sole proprietor and manager

R.E. Ellbreik—assistant manager and treasurer

Capt. B.F. Tatum—press agent and general manager

Walter Morosco—equestrian director

John H. Trewalls—general advance agent

Frank Percy—assistant contracting agent

Wm. Watson and two assistants—lithographers and programmers

Wm. Wall and four

assistants—billposters

Thomas Weldon—leader of band and orchestra

John R. Ward—master of transportation

Jack Bradoe—boss canvassman

Tom Pulley—boss hostler

Henry Swift—watchman

Ring performances were given by the following artists:

Miss Lizzie Marcellus—premiere lady equestrienne

Charles Bell, C. Covella, and Master

Harry—male equestrians

Three Irwin Brothers, Mons. Laveley, J.

Maxwell, C. Bell, H. Andrews, W. Fletcher,

and George Dehaven—leapers, tumblers,

and specialty artists

The Morosco Family, four in number—

acrobats

Wm. H. Stowe, Chas. Porter, and H.

Buckley—clowns

Concert, managed by Burt Stowe, consisted of the following people: Burt Stowe,

Charles Gortchak, C. Bell, the Bertram

Sisters, Miss Atkins, and Harry Sharp.

Privileges were managed as follows:

Sideshow—Charles Covella

Candy stands and reserved seats—

Bradoe, Vincent, and Smith

Menagerie consisted of 10 new cages and

some old ones, well filled with a good assortment of animals,

12 baggage wagons

2 property wagons

1 chandelier wagon

- 2 trunk wagons
- 1 water tank wagon
- 2 four-horse performers hacks
- 5 carriages
- 2 family phaetons
- 1 ten-horse swan band chariot
- 2 sideshow wagons
- 2 candy wagons
- 2 four-horse bill wagons for the advance

brigade

- 2 one-horse country bill wagons
- 1 one-horse carriage

The street parade consisted of:

Ten-horse swan band chariot, containing Prof. Weldon's Crescent City Band, followed by 20 mounted gentlemen, dressed in civic uniforms;

Band of Louisiana Jubilee Singers;

Large 6 horse cage with a living lion loose on top;

Two open cages with performing bear and leopard;

Ten new and elegantly decorated cages

A newly constructed eight-horse pictorial float, 20 feet long and 16 feet high, representing the assassination of President Garfield.

The company wore new street uniforms made of fine blue pilot cloth, elegantly trimmed with gold lace, recently ordered from the Marks & Meyers clothing establishment of Erie, Pennsylvania.

On the lot the crowds converged on the 110-foot with one 50-foot middle big top and the 80-foot menagerie top. There were three horse tents, but there was no cook tent as the people all stopped at hotels for meals. In all 85 people traveled with the show.³³

Plans for the future looked good as there were to be two shows running during the fall and winter. One bearing the Stowe title was to travel overland, and then move by steamer on the Southern Rivers. The second unit would move by riverboat under the title of Dan Rice's New and Grand Circus and was to assemble at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on October 2.³⁴ This second unit never left the port as Dan Rice's divorce from his wife Rebecca came through in September and he was out of the circus business for the rest of the year.

William H. Stowe and his show went south from Ohio, into Kentucky, Tennessee, and Alabama, where they became a nautical circus playing along the Alabama River. By January 17, 1882, the show arrived at Mobile, Alabama, on board the steamer *Lotus No. 2*. This sternwheel packet steamer was 135 long and 26 wide, being built at McKeesport, Pennsylvania in 1866. There were a few new additions at the show as William and Burt's cousin Frank Stowe acting as press agent, was now in the company. Additions included Herr Lindaman—lion tamer, William Ray—midget, and Frank Singleton—giant. The company did not spend any time in Mobile as they left the same day, taking a steamer across the Gulf of Mexico to New Orleans.³⁵

The Stowe Circus was headed for Bayou LaFourche, Louisiana, and they were also headed for opposition from another nautical circus. The opposition was in the form of George S. Cole's Great Southern and Crescent City Circus, which began its tour October 20 at St. Louis. The steamer *Vigor*, a 52-foot-long, 9-foot-wide vessel built in 1873 at LaCrosse,

Wisconsin, acted as their advance boat under the command of Capt. Winslow. The show traveled on the steamer *J. H. Williams*, a vessel built in 1880 at Poplar Bluff, Missouri, and a barge named *Matt Leland* named after one of the proprietors of the show. Capt. F. J. Fogalmaster was in command of the steamer and barge as they headed south on the Mississippi River.³⁶

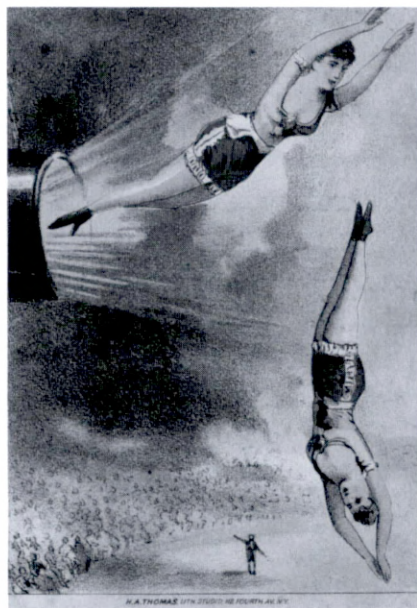
In November the title of the show changed to Cole's New Great Southern Circus, Menagerie, Museum, and Triple Musical Congress under the combined proprietorship of Leland, Monroe, and Cole. A steam calliope was added and announced the coming of the show into port, while the brass band led by Prof. Comer paraded through the streets. The show was to travel on the White River, Arkansas River, and the Mississippi River, with a stand being made at Piedmont, Missouri, November 2.

The Cole show obtained some pictorial printing when the Cooper and Jackson Circus held a sale of some circus property at Natchez, Mississippi, in late December.³⁷ They were billed just after the New Year to exhibit at Carrilton, a suburb within the corporation limits of New Orleans, January 6; Gretna, 7; Kennerville, 8; Madison, 9; Red Church, 10; Freetown, 11; Willow Bridge, 12; St. Joseph, 13; and Jamestown, 14. The Cole show then billed all the towns on the Mississippi River and Bayou Teche, for a number of stands.

The action was lively January 24 as the William H. Stowe Show began to day and date the Cole show and put their tents up in the same town. Both parties used their imaginations to have street ticket-peddlers, steamboat excursions, and street parades, to attract the crowd. At several places the admission was reduced to 25¢ and this opposition continued until February 1.³⁸

At Franklin, Louisiana, a compromise was worked out which in effect meant that both

Zazel was the feature on the Barnum show in 1880. The Stowes with Barnum again that year. John Polacsek collection.



In early 1881 William Stowe and J.C. Oates entered into a partnership with Dan Rice. This illustration of Rice, probably from the 1850s, was lithographed by Sarony, Major & Knapp, and once hung in the office of the Erie Lithograph Co., William Rusterholtz collection.

shows combined, yet retained all their performers, and their respective boats for transportation. They put on joint street parades and put up the largest display of canvas ever seen in that area. The result justified the wisdom of the scheme, and both continued this combination for the rest of the season. William H. Stowe assumed the equestrian management, George S. Cole and W. O. Monroe were the directors, while Matt Leland took on the advance. The route of the combined shows was to be up the Red River, Ouschita, Bayou Bartholemew, DeGlaize, and the Mississippi River.³⁹

By late March the Stowe show had disassociated itself from the Cole Circus with the intention of traveling to Cairo, Illinois, to refit for the coming season. The show was taken on board the steamer *Golden City* at Vidalia, Louisiana and Vicksburg, Mississippi, and commenced the northern trip on the 206-foot-long packet that ran between New Orleans and Cincinnati. At 4:30 on the morning of March 30, the steamer was approaching the Southern Transportation Company dock at Memphis, Tennessee, when a fire broke out on the main deck. After repeated and ineffective attempts to make the boat fast to the dock, she was borne into the swollen Mississippi a mass of flames.

It was a terrible morning as, in addition to the terror of the burning steamer, there was the howling of wild beasts, the heart-rending shrieks of women and children, the hoarse orders of the officers, steam whistles, fire alarms, and the crackling flames all blended in a terrible din of horror and anguish. Less than half an hour from the time the fire started the vessel was gutted, and sunk in deep water below the head of President's Island, some three miles below Memphis.⁴⁰

Frank Stowe, in an interview with the *Memphis Avalanche*, stated that he attempted to



After day and dating the George S. Cole Circus in Louisiana in January, 1882, the William H. Stowe Circus and Cole's show combined at Franklin, Louisiana, on February 1. This stock poster was used days after the partnership occurred. Circus World Museum collection.

go back after he was awakened to wake William H. Stowe, his wife, and two children, but was unable to do so owing to the smoke and flames. They were not seen by anyone after the boat took fire and must have perished in their staterooms. Frank was on the bow of the boat and above him on the cabin deck appeared Abel Butler, his wife, and four children. Frank yelled for him to throw the children down to him. He caught the baby, then another and holding both in his arms, the parents were about to pitch a third down, when he cried out, "Hold on, I have my arms full," but the third child, a girl came, and he caught her as best he could, sufficient to break her fall. The fourth child was also caught, and then the man and woman leaped down and reached the safety of shore.⁴¹

Among those saved from Stowe's Circus were:

Frank Stowe (A cousin of the proprietor), press agent

Burt Stowe (A brother of the proprietor), equestrian director

John H. Trewalls, general agent

Robert E. Elibriek, treasurer

John Glenroy, animal keeper

John Filbert, master of transportation

James Swift, master of horse

Prof. Ackerman, performing broncho horses and trained dogs

John Melain

Mrs. Stowe's grooms "Shorty" and "Ned"⁴²

There were five animals that were able to make it to safety. Three trick horses were cut loose and managed to make the shore. A buffalo escaped the boat, dove under some coal barges and swam to the bank, badly burned on the hips and sides. A bear also managed to elude the fiery vessel and swam down river, but was intercepted by some local men in two skiffs. The bear got into one of the boats, and the men tumbled out and were picked up by the occupants of the other skiff, which then towed the bruin and vessel ashore.⁴³

Among those who did not survive the fiery

ordeal were William H. Stowe, his wife Lizzie Marcellus, their two children Birdie and Willie, and J. H. Conck, the proprietor of the side show. The circus property that was lost in the fire included:

Ticket wagon

Bandwagon

Six cages

A large lioness

A white deer

A cage of birds

A "happy family"

A cage of monkeys

A leopard

"Selim," a trick horse

A trick mule

Tree pad horses

Sx working horses

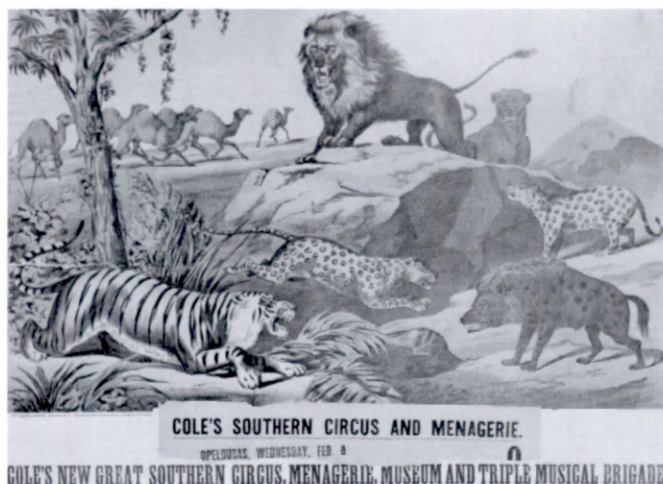
Sx canvas tents

All the paraphernalia of the show.⁴⁴

On April 1, the city of Memphis came to the relief of the survivors, who were destitute, and had the intention of holding an exhibit at the Exposition Building featuring the three horses, the buffalo, and the bear that struggled for their lives. But this action was prevented as B. F. Tatum, the former press agent and general manager of the show, had an attachment on the property for unpaid services while the show was in the southern states.⁴⁵ The creditor's officer was awaiting the arrival of the boat with an attachment, but the horrible tragedy intervened. The attachment was served, and the three trick horses were confiscated. Through the efforts of a ticket agent, transportation was found for those who wished to leave. All of the show people, excepting Frank Stowe and John H. Trewalls, left for Cincinnati the night of March 30.

An inquisition was held at Memphis to ascertain the responsibility for the accident. They found in part that the captain of the watch was careless and neglectful in the handling of a lamp near highly inflammable freight, namely jute and tar and oil barrels that were not properly covered with tarpaulins.⁴⁶

The bodies of Mr. and Mrs. Stowe were not readily found, the body of Mr. Stowe not being recovered until April 9 and that of Mrs. Stowe on April 11. The body of Birdie, the daughter, was found 47 miles below Memphis, at Lamb's Landing, on April 13. Mrs. Stowe



Another poster from the combined Stowe and Cole Circus, February, 1882. This rare group of posters have often been misidentified as W.W. Cole. Circus World Museum collection.

was identified by a diamond earring, and diamonds worth \$1,600 were found on her person when she was recovered from the river. They were deposited in the State National Bank of Memphis for safekeeping.

The body of Mrs. Stowe was shipped to relatives in Albany, New York, where she was a member of St. Paul's Episcopal Church. The remains were interred in the family grounds in Albany Rural Cemetery on April 14. She had many warm friends and the Rev. Dr. Reese spoke in the funeral sermon very feelingly of her high moral character and the loss felt by members of the church, who expressed their feelings in the number of floral offerings. Lizzie Marcellus was laid to rest in Albany, her birthplace.⁴⁷ Mr. Stowe and the children were buried in Berrien Springs, Michigan, where they had relatives.

At that time Dan Rice was interviewed regarding the loss:

Dan Rice the circus man, was found in the afternoon by an Enquirer reporter and was asked for some information relative to Mr. W.H. Stowe and his wife. Colonel Rice gave the following to the reporter; W. H. Stowe resides in New York City. He was born in Ohio, near Toledo, and was between twenty-seven and thirty years of age. He went into the negro minstrel and circus business when but a lad. He was a son of old John Stowe of the Burr Robbins and Stowe Circus. Deceased was an excellent young man, of steady habits and temperate. He was started as a manager by me last May. I organized a show for him at Aberdeen, opposite Maysville, Ky., and let him start out under my name until he got a foothold. He got along nicely, and was on the road to a splendid success. He was a first class clown and singer, and has frequently been here in Cincinnati. His mother resides here. She is over at Covington now on a visit. She is shortly to be married again. The show was on the way to Cairo to reorganize. They

had met with floods and disaster, but young Stowe was very pleasant and sociable, and also a man of great versatility of talent and ability, and the show would have pulled through alright. I fitted out young Stowe on account of his wife and children. His wife was Miss Lizzie Marcellus, aged twenty-two or twenty-three years, a beautiful, well educated and charming lady. She was a fine artiste as a rider, and was with Barnum for two years at a salary of \$100.00 a week. I raised her and gave her the same educational advantages as my own children enjoyed. In 1873 a fellow named Harry Codona enticed her from our boat at St. Paul and married her. I was in Canada, but, hearing of the elopement, telegraphed the chief of police to stop the marriage, as the girl was under age, but he was too late. By Codona she had one child, a boy, but the husband's treatment was so brutal the young wife could not endure it, and she got a divorce. This was in 1875, in Chicago, while she was attached to Barnum's Circus. Young Stowe was her next friend at the time, and he married her after the divorce was granted. She proved a good mother and wife. She bore Stowe one child, a dear little girl, who was three years of age at the time of the calamity. Mrs. Stowe had saved up \$3,000.00 and about \$2,000.00 worth of diamonds, and had bought a cottage. Her folks were excellent people, and her mother kept house for her in New York. There was quite a romance connected with me coming into possession of the child, Lizzie Marcellus. One day in 1867, I was riding in a buggy from Albany, New York to Troy. My circus had passed along in the morning. I noticed a beautiful little bare-footed, six year old girl driving some cows to pasture, and I spoke to her. I asked her where she lived, and she pointed out her house. I put the little girl in the buggy and drove to her parent's house with her. On the way I asked her if she had seen Old Dan Rice's circus pass that way. She gleefully replied that she had, and added that she had seen old Dan himself, sitting on top of a big chariot. He was an awfully ugly old fellow she said. I stopped at the farmhouse long enough to light a cigar, and the little girl's mother recognized me from having seen my picture. Lizzie was greatly astonished to learn that she had been talking to old Dan Rice himself and calling him ugly, but we made up and I started on my way. Lizzie began to cry and ran after me. I had to stop and take her back home again. I then invited the parents to come to the circus at Troy, and they did so bringing Lizzie with them.

As soon as she saw me enter the ring the little girl bounded into it, and ran up to me with open arms and wouldn't let me go. After the circus was over I told her parents that if they would



COLE'S SOUTHERN CIRCUS AND MENAGERIE.
COLE'S NEW GREAT SOUTHERN CIRCUS, MENAGERIE, MUSEUM AND TRIPLE MUSICAL BRIGADE.

The posters from the Stowe and Cole show in early 1882 featured wild animals. Circus World Museum collection.

allow their daughter to go with me that I thought she would soon get homesick and become cured of her strange infatuation, and I would then send her back to them. They consented and gave me their child. She remained with me until she married Codona. She has traveled all over the country, and I tried to persuade her not to make the Southern tour, but she would go. "Oh, my God!" cried the veteran and tender hearted showman, "what will be the feeling of that poor mother when she hears of her daughter's death?"⁴⁸

With the death of William H. Stowe, John Stowe's eldest son's career came to an end. However, William was the oldest of eight children, and their careers have yet to be chronicled.

Thanks to Ted Bowman and Bob Brisendine for assistance on the article.

Footnotes

1. *New York Clipper*, June 8, 1878.

W.W. Cole made it clear to the profession that he had no connection with the Cole Southern Circus then touring the South. About two months after Cole's ad appeared in the November 26, 1881 *New York Clipper*, George S. Cole's Southern Circus combined with the Stowe Circus. John Polacsek collection.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

THE NEW YORK CLIPPER of November 19 there is mention made of a circus owned by Messrs. Wm. Monroe, Matt Leland, and George Cole leaving St. Louis, Mo., and intending to exhibit upon the Southern rivers under the name of

"COLE'S SOUTHERN CIRCUS," ETC.

As the advertisement may create the impression that it is my show, I will state that the W. W. Cole Circus and Menagerie is not traveling,

but is now in winter quarters at Utica, New York, and that I am not connected with any circus other than the one which I own, and which is now located as above stated. (Signed) W. W. COLE, Proprietor Cole's Circus and Menagerie.

2. "Frederickton—One Day Only" by Fred H. Phillips, n.d.
3. *Clipper*, October 26, 1878.
4. *Clipper*, June 29, 1878.
5. *Clipper*, October 19, 1878.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Northwestern Republican*, Wauseon, Ohio, May 23, 1878.
8. *Clipper*, January 11, 1879.
9. *Billboard*, December 30, 1933.
10. *Clipper*, April 5, 1879.
11. *Clipper*, May 17, 1879.
12. Townsend Walsh Scrapbook, Hertzburg Circus Collection, San Antonio Public Library.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Clipper*, December 27, 1879.
15. *Clipper*, January 31, 1880.
16. *Clipper*, October 16, 1880.
17. *Clipper*, November 13, 1880.
18. *Clipper*, February 26, 1881.
19. *Clipper*, January 22 & 29, 1881.
20. *Clipper*, October 16, 1880.
21. *Memphis Appeal*, Memphis, Tennessee, October 13, 1880.
22. *Memphis Appeal*, October 26, 1880.
23. *New Orleans Times Picayune*, New Orleans, Louisiana, February 19, 1881.
24. *Clipper*, February 12, 1881.
25. *Clipper*, February 26, 1881.
26. *Times Picayune*, February 17, 1881.
27. *Times Picayune*, February 26, 1881.
28. *Clipper*, March 5, 1881.
29. *Times Picayune*, February 21, 1881.
30. *Clipper*, March 5, 1881.
31. *Clipper*, April 8, 1882.
32. *Clipper*, August 13, 1881.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Clipper*, January 28, 1882.
36. *Clipper*, September 24, 1881.
37. *Clipper*, January 7, 1882.
38. *Clipper*, February 18, 1882.
39. *Ibid.*
40. *Memphis Daily Avalanche*, Memphis, Tennessee, March 31, 1882.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Clipper*, April 8, 1882.
43. *Daily Avalanche*, March 31, 1882.
44. *Clipper*, April 8, 1882.
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Memphis Appeal*, April 2, 1882.
47. *Billboard*, "Old Time Showmen" by Charles Bernard, n.d.
48. *Memphis Appeal*, April 2, 1882.

CIRCISSIAN BEAUTIES: AUTHENTIC SIDESHOW FABRICATIONS

By Robert Bogdan

In one sense, all "freaks" were amusement world creations. It was their presentation which made people exhibits not their physiology. This is not to deny that many exhibits were born with blatant physical and mental differences. But even these were packaged to exaggerate and enhance their abnormalities in ways that made them attractions. While this is true, you did not have to be born with an abnormality to be an exotic freak. In fact, most people exhibited as, for example, Circassian Beauties, snake charmers, and "wild men" had nothing demonstrably different about them except the way they were presented. Here we look at one genre of authentic sideshow fabrication, the Circassian Beauties.

Patrons of any 1880 freakshow were likely to encounter a woman exhibit with puffy, Middle Eastern style, three-quarter length pants and flowing garments, topped by a teased-out mound of frizzled, bushy, dark hair. She was likely to have a water pipe on stage and tell of her life in a Turkish Harem. Whether her name was Zana Zanolbia, Zalumma Agra, Zoe Meleke, Zula Zeleke, Zoberdie Luti, or another equally exotic, the talker would state that she was from the purest stock of Caucasian in the world: she was a genuine Circassian Beauty.

These Circassians were introduced into the freakshow in the 1860's and shortly afterwards every dime museum and circus sideshow had one or wanted one. There was nothing very unusual about the women who were exhibited in that role. Of course, one of the requirements was that they be physically attractive; but they were not distinguishable

from thousands of other attractive 19th century Victorian women. All there was to the Circassian Beauty was the presentation, a presentation that depicted the women on exhibit as exotic and erotic.

The background for this showmen's creation came from a combination of current events and scientific source. For the "science" behind it we have to look at Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, the great German comparative anatomist whom some consider to be the founder of physical anthropology. Blumenbach was dissatisfied with the way humans were dealt with in the famous classification scheme devised by Linnaeus. So, in 1775, he undertook a major revision based on a careful examination of many human skulls. In 1795 he introduced the persistent but misleading term, "Caucasian," when he found a strong resemblance between a skull in his collection which came from the Caucasus and the skulls of Germans. But, Blumenbach was a strong monogenist, convinced that all human beings had one common origin, he conjectured that the Caucasus was not only the origin of Europeans but all humans.

According to monogenist thought, God formed humans in their pure form. As they spread out over the globe, they degenerated in appearance. Blumenbach's and other monogenists' ideas were transformed to suggest that the purest and most beautiful form

of humans were the Circassians, one tribe of the Caucasian Region of Russia—a mountainous area on the Black Sea and close to Turkey, then the Ottoman Empire.

The Crimean war, a battle in the mid-nineteenth century which pitted what are now Russians against what are now Turks, was in part a land dispute. It was alleged that Circassian women were stolen during Turkish raids and sold in the white slave markets of Constantinople, where they were bought for service in barbaric Turkish and Persian harems. How much of it was myth and how much was real is up in the air, but the story of the Circassian beauties was well known to mid-nineteenth century America. The Crimean War, in which France and Great Britain supported the Turkish sultan against Russia, focused Americans' attention on Asia Minor. Tales of bloodshed, atrocities and the abuse of minority groups, as well as tales of veiled women and harems were part of the intrigue that surrounded the area which is now Turkey. Even up until the First World War Turkey was cut off from Western influence. In the second half of the 19th century and into the 20th century, the area around the Black Sea was a prime backdrop for the creation of exotic tales for freakshow presentations.

In 1851 Barnum's American Museum produced a stage spectacular, *The Revolt of the Harem*, with Arabs, Tartars, Circassians and camels. The pageantry included the capture of the Circassian beauty in the desert. In the same year Barnum took his Asiatic Caravan, Museum and Menagerie on the road, the name of which capitalized on America's in-

This Barnum & Bailey side show group posed in Madison Square Garden in the 1890s. Unzie the Circassian beauty is in the second row behind the tallest midget.



terest in the exotic East. Even the "Streets of Cairo" at the 1893 Chicago Exposition, with its belly dancers and Asian exotica, was an expression of America's fascination with Asia Minor.

In the spring of 1864 P.T. Barnum sent John Greenwood Jr., an employee of the American Museum, to the Middle East in quest of "a horned woman" whom he was to bring back for exhibit. He found the woman but the story of her horn was an exaggeration. She had a nothing more than a pronounced cyst, hardly enough to justify bringing her to the United States as a "curiosity." Barnum wrote to Greenwood and told him to stop in Constantinople and buy a "beautiful Circassian girl." Barnum's account of the outcome, which was published in his autobiography, is evasive. Shortly after Greenwood's return a Circassian went on exhibit at the American Museum. She was presented as Greenwood's quarry, obtained by him in the disguise of a Turk in the dangerous and provocative slave market.

But there is an alternative chronicle of the events leading to the introduction of "Circassians" into the American freakshow. In a version by John Dingess, a contemporary of Barnum's, Greenwood returned from his trip empty handed. A few weeks later a young woman came to the museum looking for work. She had bushy hair, but nothing remarkable enough to make her a museum attraction. Disappointed in Greenwood's lack of success, Barnum saw in her the possibility of a Circassian and engaged her. Oscanyna, a Turk, then residing in New York, was consulted as to appropriate dress and name and, in a short time, the girl appeared at the museum in her silks as a full fledged Circassian. The lecturer, in introducing the beauty, related the details of perils that attended Mr. Greenwood's exertions and how he finally had to resort to high priced bribery to insure success and keep himself out of prison.

If we were not familiar with Barnum's antics we might be in a quandary over which tale to believe. The fact that Barnum was evasive in his autobiography about Greenwood's success further makes Dingess's version more credible. In addition, there is reason to believe that all the other Circassian Beauties that were exhibited at Barnum's American Museums were local women. In a "Biographical Sketch of the Circassian Girl" that Barnum sold in conjunction with the exhibition of Zoe Meleke, another Circassian, Barnum goes on at great lengths to explain the fact that his exhibit, who is supposed to be from Circassia, did not know anything about that area and, besides, spoke American English.

Being of a very tender age at the time of her exodus from the land of her nativity, her recollections of Circassia are of course very imperfect and obscure; the associations of her far off country seem to her an imperfect and confused dream, rather than a reality; and from her long severance from the people of her kind, she has partially, if not entirely, lost remembrance of her native tongue; and yet, as has been



The most famous Circassian beauty was Zoe Meleke who appeared with the Barnum show. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives.

stated elsewhere in this little sketch, she speaks the language of her adopted land with an ease and fluency that would puzzle the most cunning linguist that was not otherwise informed to discover that she was not a native of America (Biographical Sketch of Circassian Girl c. 1875).

With the introduction of the Circassian Beauty in the 1860's, Barnum launched a

Zola Zolene another Circassian side show attraction appeared with circuses in America in the 1880s.



prototype. In a short time there were a score of imitations of the "original." In 1899 Dingess observed:

More than thirty years have elapsed, and probably not one of the dozen or more "Circassian Girls" now being exhibited at Dime Museums and in sideshows, is near that many years old, yet "the lecturer" when introducing his curiosities almost invariably announces "She was brought to this country by John Greenwood for Barnum's American Museum."

It is doubtful that the frizzled Afro-like hair, which became the trade mark of the Circassians had anything to do with the appearance of real Circassians. Those who became the "beauties" had to engage in the unappealing task of washing their hair in beer, not rinsing it, and then teasing it to take on the appearance of the original fraud. As the Circassian hoax got handed down through the amusement world, the original appearance was somewhat modified. Some that were exhibited as mysterious women from the harems were albinos of European stock who let their hair grow, dyed it dark and soaked it in stale beer.

By 1910 Circassians lost their appeal and were dropped as a standard freakshow feature. In an attempt to rouse interest in Circassian exhibits and to keep the type viable, some become multi-oddity attractions. That is, not only was their physical appearance the claim to fame but they became Circassian snake charmers, mind readers and the like.

Circassian Beauties were a freakshow exhibit cast in the exotic mode. But unlike other exotics, the emphasis was not on how inferior and primitive they were. In fact in the presentation of some there was a strong element of aggrandizement. For example, in the "true life" pamphlet, *A Brief Sketch of the Beautiful Circassian Girl Zoe Meleke* (c.1875), Zoe is presented as:

Among the most charming attractions offered to America people of the present day, as a most chaste and delicate curiosity, is a young and beautiful native of Circassia. This young lady is highly distinguished for her rare personal attractions, for great powers and cultivation of mind, and for a most amiable and benevolent disposition.

Part of the appeal though was the exotic mystery of the Near East and the exploitation of the savage imagery of the Circassians' captors, the Turks.

For over forty years Circassian Beauties provided freakshow patrons exotic intrigue, and "Zuleika, The Circassian Sultana, Favorite of the Harem was really an Irish immigrant from Jersey City." (Fellows 1936).

Interestingly, although showmen would acknowledge that exhibits like the Circassians were completely made up for the purpose of presentation, they would not consider them "gaffs." That word, was reserved for fakes that pretended to be born with anomalies. Circassians and others were authentic fabrications, people working within legitimate roles with a long history in the amusement world.

JULY 4th CIRCUS MENUS

The dining department stewards on circuses of old enjoyed serving elegant meals on special occasions. Even the chefs on the advance cars followed the practice. The extensive meals were usually served on the 4th of July and on the closing day of the season. The final day's offering was called the farewell dinner.

To commemorate these extensive culinary offerings a printed menu was provided at each place in the dining tent. Many of the menus used colorful original art

work, and often contained four or more pages with the course listing on the inside.

The custom of using printed menus for fancy dinners started in the early 1890s. In more recent years, John Staley, a well known circus steward, provided Independence Day meals on Al G. Kelly & Miller Bros. and the Clyde Beatty Circus in the 1950s. One of the last July 4th menus was printed for the dinner prepared by Josephine Silverlake on Birnam Bros. in 1964.



**BUFFALO BILL'S
WILD WEST**
SZEGED, Hungary.

M E N U		
Young Onions	RELISH	Sweet Pickles
Chicken with Rice	Olery	
Baked Salmon	SOUP	Clam Chowder
	FISH	Fried Smelts
	ROAST	
	Young Vermont Turkey, Celery Dressing	
	Armour's Quality Brand Ham and Mashed Turnips	
	ENTREE	
Pot Roast		Egg Noodles
Brown Flake Potatoes	VEGETABLES	Asparagus Tips in Cream
Vanilla Wafers	DESSERT	Cosmopolitan Cream
Fruit Punch	DRINKS	Coffee
	Spring Water	

SELLS-FLOTO

GENERAL OFFICER: DENVER, COLO.
SEASON 1913

F. B. HUTCHINSON, MANAGER DIXIE ENGLE, STEWARD

ANNUAL FOURTH OF JULY DINNER
LIVINGSTON, MONTANA

LITTLE NECK COCKTAILS

CONSOMME OF GREEN TURTLE CRAB SALAD

OLIVES CELERY CHOW CHOW

CHICKEN A LA MARYLAND CORN FRITTERS

CALF'S BRAINS ON TOAST

PINE APPLE FRITTERS

PRIME RIBS OF BEEF—AU JUS

ROMAN PUNCH

Fourth of July
1929
Medina, N. Y.

Dinner Card

Downie Bros.
Wild Animal Circus

Andrew Downie - - President
James Heron - - Manager

Annual Fourth of July
Dinner

GIVEN BY
Andrew Downie
TO THE EMPLOYEES OF THE
WALTER L. MAINS
FASHION PLATE
SHOWS

July 4, 1919

ANDREW DOWNIE
Sole Proprietor and Manager

JOHN L. FEHR CHAS. PEASE
Supt. of Commissary "Band Wagon Fat"
and Purchasing Agent Steward and Chef

COOK BROTHERS
WORLD'S
GREATEST SHOWS


D. CLINTON COOK, Manager-Director

HOTEL DE COOK BROTHERS
Port Huron, Michigan, July the 4th, 1917

BARNUM & BAILEY, LIME?

Greatest Show on Earth



4 JULY, 1899
PLYMOUTH.



MENU.


Three of Tomato.
Fried Sole a la Washington.
Boiled Turbot-New England style.
Ravi Corquet-Wine Sauce.
Prime Rib
Young Pig stuffed.
Lamb-Mint Sauce-Green Peas.
Philadelphia Chicken-dressing.
Lettuce Salad-Green Onions.
New Potatoes-Butter beans.
Bumpkin Pie.

KLEIN & KOHL, Caterers, U.S.A.


July 4th
1916
MANKATO, MINN.

HOTEL de WHEELER BROS.

Fourth of July Celebration


Sponsored by the Members of—
Al. G. Barnes Circus
 Season 1935



Fort Francis, Ontario
 Canada
 S. L. Cronin - Manager

SOUVENIR MENU

JULY 4th, 1924
 WHITE PLAINS, N. Y.



JAMES PATTERSON
 SOLE OWNER AND MANAGER
 Gentry Bros. - James Patterson
 Circus

OVERTURE

"It Ain't Goin' To Rain No More"
 Director John Dusch's Concert Band

MENU

Soup	Queen Olives
Clam Broth	Spring Vegetables
Celery Hearts	Gherkins
Cressy	Roasts
Roast Young Chicken and Dressing	
Roast Sirloin of Beef in its own juice	
Roast Leg Young Pork, Apple Sauce	
Shrimp Salad	
Baked Virginia Ham, Sliced Tomatoes	
Fruit Punch	
Mashed Potatoes	New Peas
Asparagus Hollandaise	
Assorted Cold Meats	
Ice Cream	Assorted Cakes
American Cheese	Toasted Crackers
Cigars	Cafe Nor
Steward—Levi Dyer	
Chef—Wm. Bowen	
Head Waiter	
G. Cooper, assisted by 30 waiters.	

CIRCUS WAGON HISTORY FILE

The Ringling Bros. Giraffe Wagon and Its Predecessors

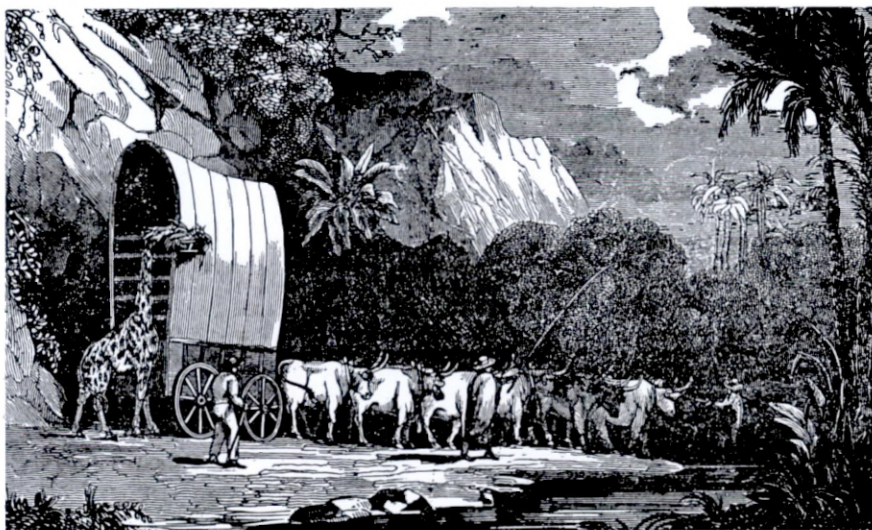
by Fred Dahlinger Jr.

One of the new attractions of this year's Great Circus Parade will be a recreation of the Ringling Bros. World's Greatest Shows giraffe wagon of the 1890's. The inclusion of a live giraffe in the Milwaukee extravaganza recalls one of the rarest features in the annals of circus parade history. Introduced in the 1870's, only a few circus proprietors risked displaying one of their prize attractions on the streets of the cities which they visited. This paper commemorates the daring of these impresarios, and in particular the Ringling brothers, who last staged the event in July 1896.

The presence of three species of mammals has always served as a benchmark to differentiate the great circus menageries from the average collections. These three were the rhino, the hippo and the giraffe. Of the three, the rhino was by far the rarest, in terms of the number exhibited by shows in the past. Few circuses paraded their rhinos. The hippo, the most common of the big three, thrived in captivity, living for forty years or more and surviving the many changes in show ownership. Usually housed in a long den fitted with a rear mounted water tank, hippos were a relatively common sight in circus parades, present not only in the marches of the big shows but in those of the medium size outfits as well.

Both the rhino and the hippo have a horizontal profile, one which is well suited to confinement in a four wheeled wagon which had to be pulled overland or carried on a circus flat car. The giraffe, however, has a vertical arrangement, one which runs contrary to most modes of transportation. Additionally, it is a very fragile animal, both physically and mentally. Its long spindly legs

The oldest menagerie interior view known to exist today is this 1876 stereo view of the Cooper & Bailey giraffe den. Unfortunately the reflection from the glossy paint job makes it impossible to read the painted inscription on the side. Ted Haussman collection.



The earliest vehicles used to transport giraffes in the U.S. probably resembled this c.1838 wagon which was used to haul the animals after their capture in Africa. Pfening Archive.

and great neck are prone to breakage at the least bit of difficulty, while its docile temperament renders it susceptible to shock due to slight disturbances, or changes in surroundings or habits. Couple these factors

with an occasional dose of negligent handling and ignorance about proper diet and it is readily apparent that keeping a giraffe alive and healthy on a traveling circus was a difficult proposition.

Although a stuffed giraffe had been exhibited in Boston in 1835, the need for a wagon to carry a live example did not arise in the U.S. until June 1838, when two specimens arrived from Africa's Kaliharri desert. An account of the Rufus Welch and





Caleb Weeks sponsored expedition which secured the animals was printed in an 1839 Macomber, Welch & Co. courier, and included in it was an illustration of one of the earliest vehicles used to transport a giraffe. The wagon itself appears to have been a standard dray or freight vehicle with low sides. The top consisted of a series of enormous wooden hoops, over which was stretched a cloth or canvas cover. In one view the giraffe is standing behind the wagon, eating food from an elevated manger. It is possible that this was the traveling mode adopted after the animal became accustomed to the presence of human beings. Undoubtedly loading and transporting such a beast in a top heavy carriage through the tropics must have been a trying proposition. The ability to have it simply follow the wagon would have been a welcome relief.

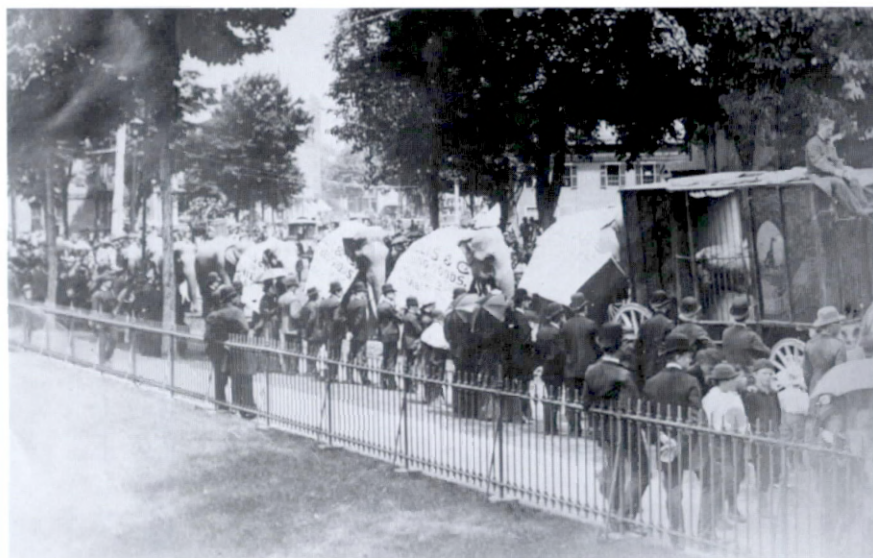
The June, Titus, Angevine & Co. giraffe was drawn by a coach and six to Springfield, Massachusetts in 1839, but another on the Welch show the same year was led overland, in the manner of the Africa cut. It stumbled and fell enroute from Elizabeth to Newark, New Jersey in November 1839, breaking its

This c.1906 Forepaugh Sells den may have originated on the Sells brothers circus in the 1880's. The sunburst wheels suggest that it was once a parade vehicle. The original negative of this view is owned by Albert Conover.

neck. Rider John Glenroy, from whose book this note comes, had earlier recorded the acquisition of "several cages of animals, among them being a Giraffe." His statement suggests that a wagon was furnished for the beast, but perhaps it was only used when it was necessary to conceal the featured giraffe from prying eyes. How these vehicles were constructed is not known, but undoubtedly they resembled the overgrown balloon top contraption utilized in Africa.²

The concealment of giraffes between dates is confirmed in part by a statement from

The canvas cover was down and the sideboards were off when this photo of the Forepaugh giraffe den was taken in the late 1880's. The big tuskers behind the wagon suggest it was at least ten or eleven feet tall. Albert Conover collection.



Chess Briarmead. Writing in the April 17, 1875 *New York Clipper*, Briarmead noted that the giraffes of the 1854 Great Broadway Menagerie "were transported in singular looking vans, from which they were taken during exhibition." While confirming that unusual construction was employed in giraffe wagons, it is unfortunate that Briarmead did not detail how they looked. The exhibition of the beasts outside of the vans infers that the animals could not be properly displayed within the wagon, meaning that the sides were fixed or difficult to remove. It is possible that the animals were kept inside a net enclosure or perhaps tethered to a stake or the wagon with a long strap connected to the beast's halter. Until about 1900 giraffes were exhibited both inside their wagons and in external pens, but after 1900 the pen arrangement was favored.

The first photographs of a giraffe wagon were taken on June 5, 1876 when the Cooper, Bailey & Co. Great International Ten Allied Shows played Ottawa, Illinois. With the presumed cooperation of the show management, a local photographer named Bowman took a stereo view camera to the lot and used it to record posed scenes both inside and outside of the tents. He took about a half dozen views; as a group, they are the earliest known attempt to record a large portion of a single circus on film. It is fortunate that two of the stereos Bowman made showed the Cooper, Bailey & Co. giraffe wagon, one as it was about ready to parade and the other when it was on display inside the menagerie. The latter, the earliest known menagerie interior shot, shows the giraffe standing inside its wagon.³ Overall the vehicle had a mud show type construction, with a lightly constructed wood panel body and tall, narrow, spoked wheels. The rear axle marked the floor level of the wagon, which was about two feet lower than the conventional cage wagon beside it. The giraffe was exhibited inside the wagon while in the menagerie, a display made possible by removable side panels. A mesh net spanned the side opening, the top edge of which was affixed to the framework which supported a clamshell shaped canopy. This structure, a remnant of the earlier canvas top on giraffe wagons, could be raised or lowered as desired, similar to that of a carriage canopy. It provided additional headroom for the beast without adding an excessive amount of weight to the wagon. The sides of the wagon were bowed out between the wheels, presumably to enable the animal to turn around with less difficulty. It is probable that the Cooper, Bailey & Co. giraffe of 1876 was a young animal, perhaps two years or less, and measured ten to eleven feet tall. While such an animal did not satisfy advance billings which proclaimed giraffes to be twenty three feet tall, practically speaking the animal was adequately small to be conveniently transported in a railroad circus wagon.

The other Bowman view which included the Cooper, Bailey & Co. giraffe den was the parade mount, posed in snakelike fashion in front of the show tents. On the far left, behind the big lead bandwagon and a platform type tableau wagon, can be seen the giraffe cage.



Identifiable by the canvas bubble on top, the photo offers irrefutable proof that by 1876 at least one giraffe wagon was being paraded on the streets of America, albeit in a closed condition. Only the shiny lettering on the side of the big den disclosed the nature of its contents to the spectators as it passed by. The giraffe den was also paraded when the show was in Australia in 1877 and possibly in 1878, pulled by an unusual combination hitch of four camels and two horses.⁴

Regardless that his intention to have a giraffe on his new circus came to naught when the beast died on board ship in March 1871, P. T. Barnum did succeed in owning two live giraffes by 1875.⁵ Both beasts and one giraffe cage were among the Barnum show assets listed to be sold in November 1875, at a sale which marked the end of the Barnum-W.C. Coup partnership. It is possible that both giraffes traveled in the single cage, but it is just as likely that only one was on the show, the other leased to another circus. Following the 1881 tour of the merged Barnum and Great London circuses another giraffe cage was offered for sale, while in late 1884 two more were sold. The latter two were described as being fifteen and sixteen feet long and suitable for either giraffe or hippo. How one wagon could accommodate either species with equal ease is beyond this writer's imagination.⁶ The surplus of giraffe wagons on the Barnum & London show of the mid 1880's was undoubtedly due to the importation of a veritable herd of giraffes by Barnum in 1882. Eight were shipped by Carl Hagenbeck to the show, three of which died enroute. This left five, which added to two imported in 1881 yielded seven giraffes available for the show's menagerie.⁷ This extraordinary accumulation of giraffes by the Barnum show management started a pattern of giraffe ownership. Ultimately, at least one quarter of all American circus giraffes were owned by the Barnum show or its descendant Barnum & Bailey organization.⁸

In 1884 the big feature of the Sells Bros. Circus was their 50 cage menagerie, another example of the late nineteenth century circus

The need for a padded opening in the roof of giraffe wagons is amply demonstrated in this c.1894 view of the Ringling den. Note how the beast's shoulders are just about level with the roof line. Pfening Archives.

attitude that quantity was better than quality. Included in this zoological aggregation were two hippos which shared one cage, a rhino and a giraffe. The giraffe wagon would have been just another utilitarian vehicle were it not for the fact that the giraffe was able to stick its head and neck out of the top of the wagon while in parade. The body of the beast remained concealed inside the wagon according to an account in the July 22, 1884 *Wisconsin State Journal*. This single record of what may not have been a routine event was confirmed by John R. Shepard, whose recollection of the display was printed in the May-June 1929 issue of *White Tops*.

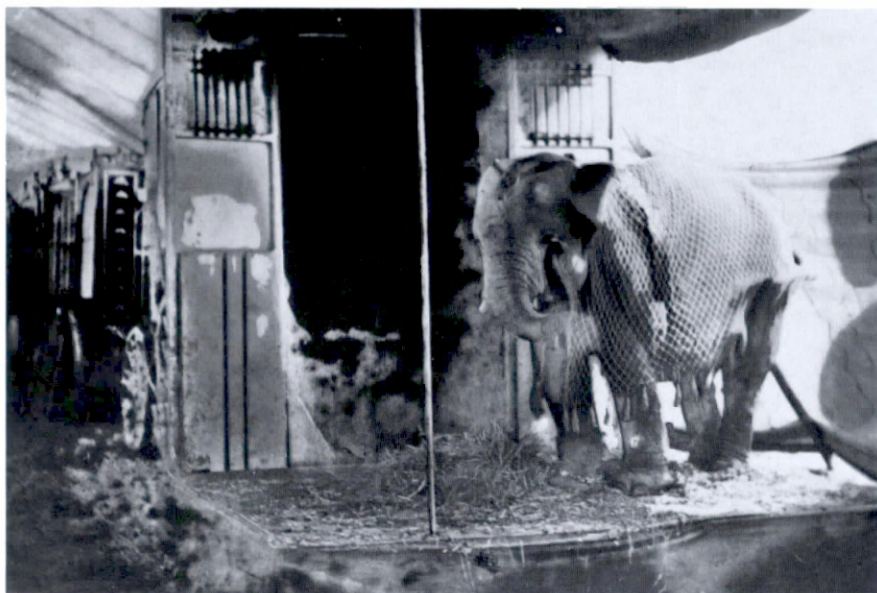
If the 1884 Sells giraffe den survived into the 1900's, it may be the one which a photographer caught on a Forepaugh Sells lot sometime between 1903 and 1906. The view is unusual for it shows the head and neck of a large giraffe fully extended out of

The roof of the Ringling giraffe den was changed when it was modified to haul Keddah, the Ringling brothers' white elephant feature of 1897-1898. Pfening Archives.



the wagon, much in the manner of the 1884 description. The wagon was still wrapped in its traveling canvas, presumably just brought from the train to the lot. In some regards it resembles the vehicle used in the 1890's on the Ringling show, but it is extremely doubtful that there is any connection between the two other than a shared design.

The Adam Forepaugh circus was noted for its strong menagerie, an area in which the show took a secondary position to no other, not even the better known Barnum show. The immense variety of attractions on the Forepaugh lot and in the Forepaugh parade usually resulted in only the most spectacular or featured attractions being noted by the local reporters. Thus, while Forepaugh owned a giraffe as early as the 1870's, little direct mention is made of one in newspaper reviews. Forepaugh paraded his giraffe den routinely in the 1880's, especially in the latter half of the decade. Four photographs from c.1888 to 1890 survive which show the giraffe den coming down the street in Forepaugh's parade. One, undated at present, shows the wagon with its side panels removed, the beast in full view behind vertical bars. The other three, one from 1888 and two from 1890, show the den paraded in closed fashion, with a canvas bubble erected on the center roof area. The back doors of the Forepaugh



This rare view of Keddah was taken inside the Ringling menagerie tent in 1898. The rear end of the giraffe den is in the background, with Keddah, covered by a tassled fly sash, standing on an elevated platform under a striped awning. Circus World Museum Collection.

vehicle ran the full height of the wagon, the upper half being fitted with screens for ventilation.⁹ The Forepaugh giraffe den bears a strong resemblance to the 1876 Cooper, Bailey & Co. Paneled bodies and bulged sides can be seen on both, but whether there is any connection between the two is unknown at this time. Assuming the Forepaugh wagon to be of later vintage than the 1876 vehicle, it may be reasonable to assume that the design of giraffe dens became fixed in the 1880's.

The last giraffes on the John Robinson Circus were purchased from New York's Central Park Zoo in 1883.¹⁰ It is believed that a pair was acquired, as 1884 Robinson publicity material refers to two beasts which strolled about in a network enclosure.¹¹ At least one of the animals, or a replacement, was on the show in the late 1880's, and was still with it when the Robinson family made a half hearted attempt to exit the circus business in 1892. One of the items the Robinsons did sell at this time was their giraffe, which was acquired by the Ringling brothers. The transaction brought about the circumstances whereby our primary subject came to exist in Baraboo.

The Ringling purchase of the Robinson giraffe was their first acquisition of a rare exotic animal, following the virtually mandatory purchase of two elephants in 1888. The animal arrived in winter quarters on December 17, 1892, having been shipped inside its cage on a flat car. A large wooden and canvas shanty, erected over the den and heated by a stove, kept the chill away, a necessary precaution since the thermometer registered zero the day it arrived. While it is logical that the animal was shipped from the Robinson's Terrace Park, Ohio winter-quarters, the account of the animal's receipt in the Baraboo paper states it came from New York. While it is possible the Ringlings told the tale that way to conceal its second hand status, it is also possible that it originally came from New York.¹²

Mamie, as the giraffe was called by Ringling personnel, was at least thirteen years old. She had been cared for during that entire

period by a keeper known as "Giraffe John," an "old German" who slept in a small compartment in the front of the wagon. Giraffe John and Mamie had as close a relationship as Matthew Scott and Jumbo, if trade reports are to be believed. When John had reason to leave her, a small dog named

The interior padding of the Ringling giraffe den can be seen in this Charles Andress view taken in the early 1900's. Although the animal was a short, young one, keeping it in the den for exhibition artificially increased its perceived height. Circus World Museum Collection.



Bismarck substituted as her temporary companion.¹³

Mamie's cage resembled the other giraffe dens of the late 1880's and was presumably at least a decade old when the Ringlings acquired it. A photograph of the wagon first published in the 1894 Ringling Route Book is the first clear side view available of this, or any other, giraffe den. In it can clearly be seen the light construction typical of such vehicles, suitably adapted to so docile and fragile a creature. The drop body came to within a few inches of the ground, the rear wheels either affixed to the sides of the den or mounted on a dropped center axle which went under the wagon. The body itself was nothing more than a large crate, with a barred opening on at least one side for viewing. The bars may have been only on the left side, the side away from the menagerie sidewall, so that the right side could be made solid and provide some rigidity to the body. The canvas dome was still in place, but Mamie was already so large that it no longer served any useful purpose as far as she was concerned; either her head had to be down inside the wagon, or fully extended upwards, sticking out as in the photo. Surprisingly, the giraffe wagon cuts used in Ringling ads did not resemble their own vehicle, but bore a resemblance to the bowed side vehicles of Cooper, Bailey & Co. and Adam Forepaugh.

After serving the Ringling show for three and one half years, Mamie died in July 1896, when the Ringling show was touring Iowa. The show's route book records that she died enroute between the July 2 and 3 dates at Sheldon and Spencer, Iowa due to a severe cold, but later reports in the Baraboo newspapers indicated she died in the parade on July 4 at Mason City, Iowa, due to heat prostration. Mamie's remains were shipped from Mason City, Iowa to the Field Museum in Chicago for preservation.¹⁴ To the best of the author's knowledge, no giraffe was ever paraded in America after Mamie's demise until one owned by Tony Diano made the Cristiani Bros. Circus march in the late 1950's.

The loss of Mamie in mid 1896 rendered the giraffe den surplus, but it didn't take long for the frugal Ringlings to think of another use for the wagon. In 1897 the show featured Keddah, "The Royal White Elephant of Siam." Someone in the Ringling camp decided that the old giraffe den would make a suitable traveling home for the new prima donna, one which could be shared with the appointed keeper. Not only would it serve as a palace on wheels for the pampered pachyderm, but its large sides presented ample space for show painters to illuminate with an image of the show's featured attraction.

This latter day recreation of the "white" elephant recalled the events of only thirteen years earlier, when the "Light of Asia" and "Toung Taloung" garnered great reams of free publicity when each was portrayed as the only genuine white elephant by their respective owners, Adam Forepaugh and P. T. Barnum. With the dubious validity of those claims still fresh in many minds, it is a wonder that the Ringlings decided to recreate the deception, especially at a point



Sometime in the late 1890's the Ringlings exhibited their giraffe in a net enclosure, as this photograph shows. A similar arrangement was again utilized after 1903 and only later were wire panels introduced. Walter Scholl collection, Illinois State Normal University.

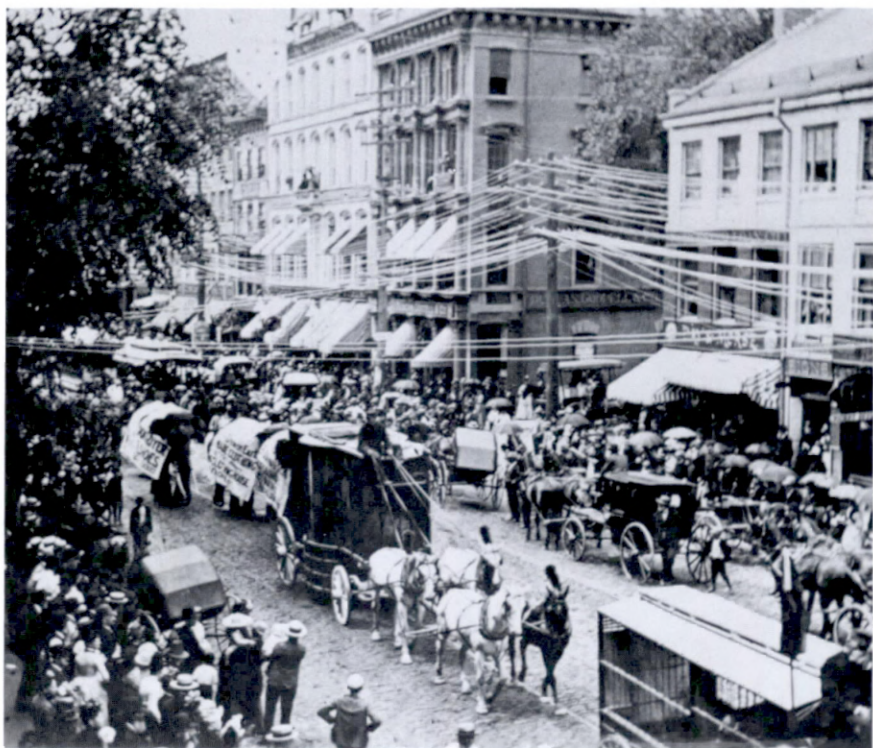
in time when they were rapidly ascending to the top of the industry on a "Sunday School" operating policy and had no need to resort to such blatantly devious features. Presumably children marveled at the animal's proclaimed whiteness, but surely adults smiled in amusement as yet another showman claimed to have secured the legendary beast.

A few modifications were made to the giraffe den to accomodate its new cargo, but most were superficial in nature. The biggest changes were made to the roof, with the

domed canopy removed and a full length roof installed, one with only a small ventilator opening in the center. The improved sealing of the body was probably a concession to the delicate nature of the elephant. The closed roof retained more of the animal's radiated body heat within the confines of the wagon, aiding in preventing the onset of cold air supported respiratory ailments.

Keddah actually rode in the wagon during train jumps and the street parade, disembarking only after the wagon had been spotted in the menagerie tent. Displayed at a

The great height and expanded center section of the Forepaugh giraffe den can clearly be seen in this 1888 view. The canvas bubble was not erected this day, allowing the wagon's occupant to peer out at the parade spectators. American Antiquarian Society.



distance from the rest of the bulls, Keddah's position on an elevated platform under a striped canopy raised the status of the allegedly royal beast in the cage line up. Still a young elephant when brought to the U.S., photographs indicate that Keddah grew quickly, by 1898 reaching a size which may have precluded further travels in the lightly constructed giraffe den.

One hazard of railroad circus travel was the constant presence of live coals spewing from the stack of the locomotive. A fire started by one of these embers caused Keddah's death. On October 15, 1898, while the show train was enroute from Vinita, Indian Territory to Fort Smith, Arkansas, a fire was discovered in the white elephant's cage. The entire interior, filled with bedding, was ablaze. The train was stopped and the fire extinguished with nearby water, but by this time the poor animal had suffered extensive burns, in addition to smoke inhalation. Recovery was doubtful, and on October 20 the elephant died.¹⁵

The old Robinson giraffe den, altered and fire damaged, presumably sat out the 1899 and 1900 tours somewhere around Baraboo, but with the acquisition of another giraffe in April 1901 the Ringlings again had a need for the vehicle. Although confirmation is lacking, it appears that the old Robinson den was extensively rebuilt, if not entirely reconstructed, by the Moeller wagon firm of Baraboo during the winter of 1900-1901. The same basic size and design was retained, but the wagon definitely had the Moeller look after the rebuild. From the pictorial standpoint, the juvenilian title of the mid 1890's was replaced with standard Ringling lettering, and competently executed paintings of giraffes were placed on the sides. Two photographs taken by Charles Andress between 1901 and 1903 show that the Ringlings continued to display their giraffe inside the wagon and not in an adjacent pen. The sideboards on the left side were still removable and the giraffe stuck its head out of a padded oval opening in the roof. Tufted padding can be seen in the front half of the wagon, a precursor of the foot thick padding which completely covered the interior of later giraffe dens. How long the reconstructed wagon remained in service is not known, but it is possible that it was used into the 1910's.

The vehicles which later replaced the old den were constructed in a stronger fashion, utilizing additional rolled steel members in the body for added strength. The advent of pens constructed from wire mesh panels necessitated the stronger construction. The panels were loaded in brackets on the sides of the wagon, substantially increasing the weight which had to be supported between the axles. It has been suggested that the wire mesh pens and other improvements originated in Europe and were introduced to America when Andrew Zingraben (?-1931), the legendary Barnum & Bailey giraffe keeper, returned to the U.S. with the show in 1903.¹⁶

To improve animal comfort, the newer giraffe vans were made taller, with an open

roof area just behind the front wheels. The opening, about four feet long, was covered with a suspended pad, something like a tumbling mat, which came in contact with the shoulders or lower neck of the larger giraffes. It softened the impact of the bumps that the beast endured as the cage was moved over city roads or on the train. Without exception, all giraffes were able to turn around in the confines of their wagons by lowering their head and neck towards the floor. Thus, a giraffe never had to back out of the den, and could simply walk out. While in the wagon most giraffes apparently sat down in the deep bedding, allowing them to keep their necks elevated in a natural position.

The rear doors of later giraffe wagons were usually made in two pieces. The two lower halves were opened first, followed by the upper halves. Indeed, overlapping plates at the top of the bottom halves prevented the upper doors from being opened first. The rationale behind the system was that if the giraffe saw the top doors open it would move forward and trip over the lower doors, not realizing that they were still closed.¹⁷

Significant contributions to this paper were provided by Bill McCarthy, Fred D. Pfening III, John Polacek and Gordon Potter. Particular thanks are due Richard J. Reynolds, animal expert extraordinaire, who furnished the author with reams of data concerning circus giraffes.

FOOTNOTES

1. Springfield, (Ma.) *Republican*, May 25, 1839.
2. John H. Glenroy, *Ins and Outs of Circus Life* (Boston, M. M. Wing & Co., 1885), p. 27.
3. CHS member Ted Haussman deserves a special note of thanks for making this rare photograph available for publication.
4. Undated clipping from *Melbourne Press*, Joseph T. McCaddon collection, Firestone Library, Princeton University.
5. *New York Times*, April 11, 1871.
6. *New York Clipper*, December 17, 1881, p. 643; December 13, 1884, p. 625.
7. *New York Times*, January 17, 1882; February 2, 1881.
8. This observation is based upon data compiled by Richard J. Reynolds.
9. These photographs are in the collections of Albert Conover, the American Antiquarian Society, the Circus World Museum and the Maine Historical Society.
10. *New York Clipper*, March 17, 1883.
11. *Stark County Democrat* (Canton, Oh.), July 31, 1884.
12. *Sauk County Democrat* (Baraboo, Wi.), December 22, 1892; 1882-1925 Ringling Bros. Composite Route Book.
13. *Chicago Intercean*, April 4, 1896. The 1893 Ringling Route Book records Peter Girtan as Mamie's keeper, suggesting a possible interruption in the tenure of "Giraffe John."
14. *Sauk County Democrat*, July 9, 1896; *Baraboo News Republic*, July 8, 1896.
15. 1898 Ringling Bros. Route Book.
16. See Edwin P. Norwood, *The Other Side of the Circus* (New York: Doubleday, 1926) pp. 66-71 for a short article concerning Zingrabens.
17. Additional commentary on this problem and the construction of later giraffe wagons can be found in Richard J. Reynolds, "Giraffes With the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus," *White Tops*, L, 6, pp. 31-35.

THE TOWERING, SKY-REACHING,
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Such general illustration and description has been under the supervision of the Ringling Brothers, and though it seems almost impossible that so many wonders could be gathered together under one roof, the Ringling Brothers (The Largest in the World), it still remains a fact that every picture and announcement has been designed for the benefit of the Giraffe, and is a valuable addition to the collection of the Giraffe. The group of pictures accompanying each advertisement is as a guarantee of the truthfulness and accuracy of the descriptions of the Giraffe, and is a valuable addition to the collection of the Giraffe.

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HIS ACTUAL HEIGHT IS 18 FEET.
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A Millionaire Menagerie Various Advertisements by Others
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The cuts used in 1890's Ringling advertisements did not faithfully depict the Ringling giraffe wagon, but one which resembled the bulge body wagons of Forepaugh or Cooper, Bailey & Co. Pfening Archive.

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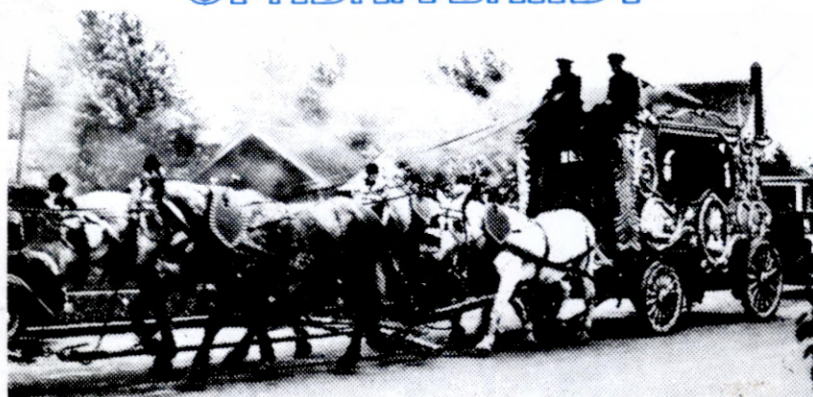
Based upon the enormously positive reaction to the Circus World event, Guernsey's is currently preparing for a second circus auction — a sale that is shaping up to be even bigger and better than the first. This auction, like Circus World, will be held in New York City in the latter part of this year. The sale will consist of several smaller, private collections, and although many items of great interest are already consigned, Guernsey's is still in search of desirable circus artifacts to include in this exceptional event.

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In the picture shown here, we see the end of the street parade, showing what a steam calliope looked like in those wonderful days of the circus street parade.

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